Towards an Idiosyncratic Calligraphic Vision

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Painting

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Statement of Sources

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and list of references given.

Rob Davidson

19/1/2010

(Date)

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Abstract

This research explores an individual artistic journey towards an idiosyncratic calligraphic vision in Painting. In examining the artist's praxis as the engine room for the development/progression of the calligraphic paint traces, vision/memory provides the foundational concept for painted images. The research builds on analysis of artists' (painters') *oeuvres* which traces the development of very individual but highly sophisticated oil traces through innovated painting systems over their lifetimes as artists. The historical and present range of artists' paintings chosen for analysis range across those experienced first hand as well as reproduced images from the sixteenth century to current times. Parallel with these analyses is self scrutiny into one's own realisations from personal painterly praxis from childhood to the present in two different countries.

The research traces the serialised assessment of the memories, influences and events that illuminated the idea of the idiosyncratic vision in painting towards the calligraphic realization and the sources/characteristics of its *modus operandi* in painting. This begins with early childhood memories of going deaf along with the consequences that challenge one in mainstream life and education.

The research then charts the first tentative steps in becoming a painter and what was being realised at the time. Hence the study demonstrates one's understanding of the calligraphic vision starting from early artistic beginnings to more in-depth research taken on in early-mid career progressing through to the now, elaborating on one's own *a priori* histories of painting from early student days to the relative present with

the subsequent analysis into the *oeuvres* developing concepts derived from praxis. The use of two studios for painterly praxis, one being in Japan and the other in Australia, has enabled the study to be subjected to the familiar and the alien, thus allowing the research an objectification it would not have had if conducted only in one well known local location.

The motifs for the praxis research were chosen for the practical requirements of accessibility, convenience, cost, weathers, familiarity, narrative and sentimental content. The subject matter was then chosen on its potential for the research in terms of accessibility, cost, changeability, familiarity and interest. The thesis documents the experimentation with the chosen motifs which culminated in two exhibitions in different countries.

The realisations gleaned from observations made in viewing both exhibitions personally and by others is that the current research has achieved its objective by providing another unique link in the journey outwards towards the idiosyncratic calligraphic vision in painting.

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Chapter Introduction

1.1 The Eye of the Artist

The artist Ron McBurnie uses his art work as an *aide memoire*. McBurnie (2000) explains that, if he wants to remember something, he will include it in an artwork so that he is able later to use this to retrieve it. This pre-eminence of the visual characterizes the approach of many artists to the world. The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary provides four definitions of vision:

> **1 a :** something seen in a dream, trance, or ecstasy; *especially* **:** a supernatural appearance that conveys a revelation **b :** a thought, concept, or object formed by the imagination **c :** a manifestation to the senses of something immaterial <look, not at visions, but at realities — Edith Wharton **2 a :** the act or power of imagination **b** (1) **:** mode of seeing or conceiving (2) **:** unusual discernment or foresight <a person of vision> **c :** direct mystical awareness of the supernatural usually in visible form **3 a :** the act or power of seeing **:** sight **b :** the special sense by which the qualities of an object (as color, luminosity, shape, and size) constituting its appearance are perceived through a process in which light rays entering the eye are transformed by the retina into electrical signals that are transmitted to the brain via the optic nerve **4 a :** something seen **b :** a lovely or charming sight.
>
> http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Vision - internet accessed 2 – 1 – 2010

For the artist vision coalesces in a special amalgam of 1 (b), 2 (b) 1, and 3 (b) meaning that the visual and memory are inextricably entwined, the one feeding the other. Indeed artists use vision as a tool to manifest ideas through painting or whatever media they use to create artworks. Remembrances of vision are therefore of prime importance in artistic praxis. The artist sights a chosen motif and commits it to artistic memory as a basis for the creative process. This cannot be likened to a photographic process as the artist's incorporation of the elements of the image into memory is very much influenced by memories already existing in the storehouse and accommodates to these.

For example, the artist looks at, explores and interrogates the changing colours in the sky from the beginning of the day till day's end and into the night, along with all the shifting weathers. These memories of light from the morning, noon, afternoon and night are recalled back in the studio, where systems in painting are experimented with to construct these sighted memories of differing times into an independent calligraphic painted vision of the colour of time, as observed by the paint traces placed on the canvas representing coloured remembered moments. These become visible recollections of memory.

This synergy between the visual and memory has always been important to artists. As Marrinan (13 - 3 - 2001) points out,

For Monet, the garden was a living still life that freed him to plumb the depths of his memory and emotions, rather than simply record his 'impression' of a scene.

In the same way, the series of hut-shaped haystacks Monet painted between 1890 and 1891 were, by roughly the same definition, still lifes. The hay would remain in the same form day after day. Here, we find Monet daring to experiment with color and technique in new ways.

http://giverny.org/gardens/fcm/stanford/ internet accessed 5 – 12 – 2009

Monet's sensory responsiveness allowed him the freedom to experiment within the filters of his memory in a way that is not really open, for example, to the photographer whose medium dictates certain binding choices at the image making moment. Figure 1.1.1 illustrates this trajectory between motif and image.

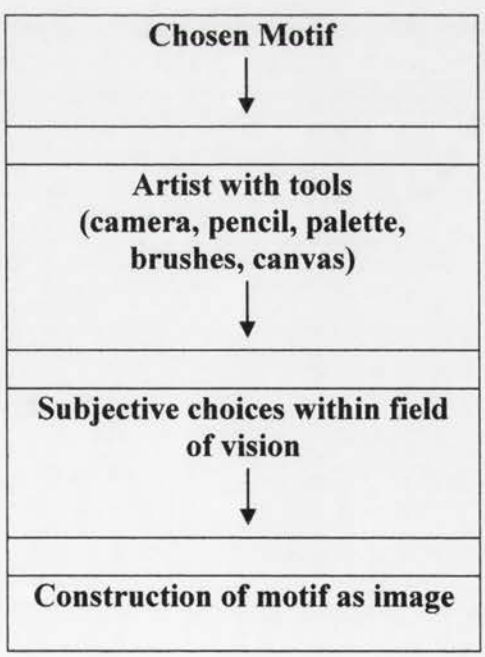

Figure 1.1.1 The Artist's Vision at a moment in time

In cases where sensory responsiveness is harnessed for experimentation or where the artist is prepared to tilt at the boundaries of practice, a different trajectory might be hypothesized as in Figure 1.1.2.

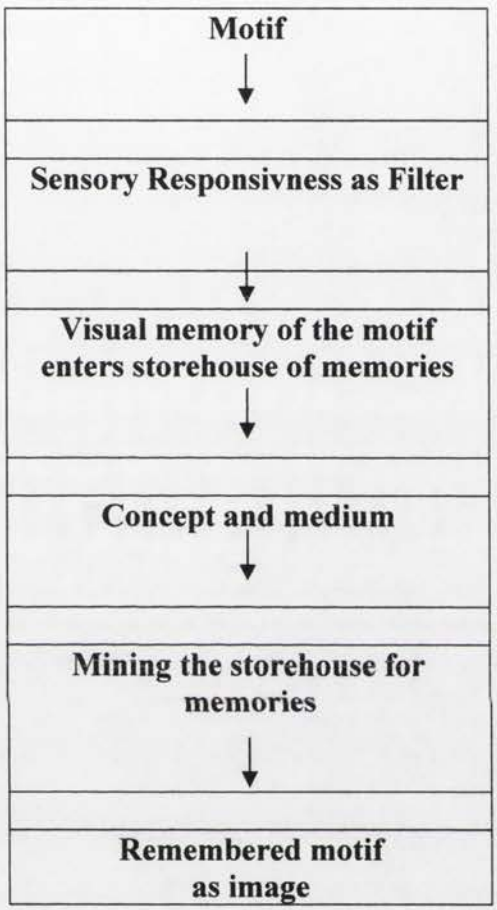

Figure 1.1.2 The Artist's Vision shaped by Time

The differences between these two artistic frames have been little understood, researched or documented in depth. It is important to consider the interaction between the development of the individual who is the artist and the memories which shape the artist's vision. The French Painter Henri Matisse (1869 – 1954) reported that he was influenced by the memories of his childhood. Spalding (2000) notes that

> Matisse said he got his sense of colour from his mother, who herself was an accomplished painter on porcelain, a fashionable art form at the time, and almost the only one in which it was considered proper for a woman to indulge. (Spalding, 2000: 15)

This remembered sense of colour was seminal in his work and shaped his development as an artist in ways that are not the same for artists whose storehouse does not contain such strongly associative colour memories.

Others artists journeyed visions spawn very different memories. For example, as an Australian artist living in Japan and seeing daily millions of people working twelve or fourteen hour days, the contrast with Perth where most people work only eight hours presents most starkly. Geographical *re*location for artists from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds can create significant *dis*location and/or a significant re-visioning, especially for those who have been trained in completely different methods from that which obtains within the terrain they now embrace as home. Given that they have no ready experiential framework within which to articulate their vision, the question arises as to how might their extant and established remembrances be distilled into a landscape that is essentially foreign to them? How, in fact, might they become acculturated to it? The influence of the immediate vision creates an uncertainty and invariably ruptures the *status quo* of the established vision that these travelled memories encounter. In this context, for example, Lambert Visser (1998) comments on the effects of his re-location experience:

> It was in May 1959 and our family had recently emigrated from Europe-Holland - to settle in Tasmania, Australia. A six-week journey by ship and the novelty of travelling by aircraft from Melbourne to Hobart had faded and diminished whilst the reality of coping with a new and alien environment confronted us each day. A total lack of English caused even the simplest daily tasks and chores necessary to care for a household of two adults and three children to be demanding, frustrating and at times demoralising. (Visser, 1998: 2)

The conflict arises when the remembered vision from the former terrain expatriates itself into a terrain of new visual sensations, travelled memories colliding with the experience of an alien landscape; this is very much evident in Visser's (1998) accounts.

From my own experience it was the very different disruption of suddenly becoming hearing impaired at the age of seven, being two weeks away from becoming stone deaf, and then being left with only 29 per cent hearing capability. The exclusion that goes with the terrain of a moderate/severe bi-lateral hearing impairment suddenly and inevitably diminishes and alters the scale of dependence on the senses. For example, a sudden disruption to hearing can increase dependence on the visual. When crossing the road one typically relies on both hearing (the toot of a car's horn, the ringing of a cyclist's bell, the roar of a truck's engine, the clang of a tram etc.) and sight (looking to right and to left, sighting errant automobile behaviour) for danger signals. With significantly impaired hearing, crossing the road necessitated greater visual acuity since reliance on hearing was thus rendered very unsafe.

A new need for visual signs more than likely enhanced one's sensibility to painting as explained by Leonardo Da Vinci (translated by McMahon, 1956)

> The forms of men must have attitudes appropriate to the activities that they engage in, so that when you see them you will understand what they think or say. This can be done by copying the motions of the dumb, who speak with movements of their hands and eyes and eyebrows and their whole person, in their desire to express that which is in their minds. Do not laugh at me because I propose a teacher without speech to you, who is to teach you an art which he does not know himself, for he will teach you better through facts than will all the other masters through words.
>
> McMahon (1956) translation of Leonardo da Vinci, p. 105.

Such a new relationship with vision means articulating the world differently from before and in ways that distinguish one from the mainstream populace. My need to rely on the achievements of visual memory became pre-eminent. For instance, within my early childhood, there is a clear memory of executing a watercolour painting soon after severe deafness had set in; more particularly it was the memories of achieving the performative outcomes in the traditions of applying washes of watercolour. The sensations of how the orange blended into the cobalt blue and the subsequent experimental variations of the watercolour techniques (my mother praised these efforts) are remembered with fondness, essentially since art became a

major objective to pursue and it was also one in which a major achievement was still possible.

Even after leaving secondary college, the desire go to art school had not subsided. Yet this was not the accepted practice in my time nor mostly any other time as evidenced throughout history by documented fights between nascent artist and family. For instance, one commonly heard refrain was "Why waste your time?" and "How are you going to feed yourself?". These are fairly typical comments faced in my era. In another age, there is the example of conflict with family in Matisse's experience as quoted by Spalding (2008):

> Seeing that I was becoming a burden to myself during my convalescence, my friend advised me to try the same distraction. The idea didn't please my father, but my mother took it upon herself to buy me a paint-box with two little chromos in the lid, one showing a water mill, the other the entrance to a hamlet. (Spalding 2000: 8)

The vision of the artist is shaped by experience and often such events, which seem inconsequential at the time, essentially become the catalyst for artists to begin their careers.

1.2 Artistic vision and experiencing the world differently.

Some art educators argue that the skill of drawing is teachable. To some extent this is defensible as there are laws of perspective and form within desired outcomes of art

education which can be taught and applied by students of drawing. The capacity to apply these will result in certain representations of a chosen motif but these will not necessarily reflect any idiosyncrasies in the vision of the individual executing the drawing. The student of science similarly learns certain laws of scientific experimentation and can thus faithfully replicate experiments. These learned scientific skills, however, do not necessarily mean that the student will be able to pose the questions which will take the discipline to the next level of knowledge. So it is with the student of art. Reproduction is one level but the capacity to tilt at the boundaries, to question what is seen within the motif is quite another level – and that is what feeds the idiosyncratic vision of the artist who changes the trajectory of art.

Another variable comes from the fact of individual differences in the acuity and activity of the senses and their use. This is especially so in relation to individuals with disabilities, for example, limited mobility of hands or arms. The French painter Auguste Renoir (1841 - 1919) suffered from a severe arthritic condition which doubtless would now militate against the achievement of accuracy in form, tone and perspective demanded by strict drawing methodologies. Might a student with Renoir's dexterity challenges in fact run the risk of failure in Drawing 101? More to the point, might aspiring artists have creative capacities that might be realized in other ways; for instance, students could use sound from their voices as site specific performance art. Sound can be the basis for artistic expression. Through the vast array of media currently available to artists, could they not draw lines in the sand with the same sophistication as a pencil, whereby the whole body becomes like an enormous hand and subsequently take photographs of the works? Those who have not themselves suffered impairment have little sense of how one's perceptual frame

is irretrievably altered by a disruption to the orientation of the senses. But this does not invalidate the altered senses, and each discipline can potentially benefit from the different balance that is the result. Therefore artists whose idiosyncratic mix of skills and abilities/disabilities lies outside the so called *normal* range may not fit well within the accepted artistic learning paradigm.

Indeed what is the evidence that any particular methodology makes one see better in articulating the motif through a specific drawing process? To what extent might this dictate who is able to progress through art school and who is not? The measures used in universal responses in art are extremely limiting for people who engage the world alternatively, due to some faculty of an individual not working to full capacity. Yet this does not mean thus an individual cannot do so - often such people excel in the same area as their counterparts, the fully capacitated examples within society. What happens if some of the participants in an experiment based upon hearing are afflicted with like the Spanish Painter Francisco de Goya (1746 - 1828), or the Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh (1853 –1890) or me. More than likely we would not hear the stimulus; Goya could never have done so as he was stone deaf.

If people without full hearing ability are involved in a hearing based experiment, how reasonable is it to expect such individuals to respond in a similar way to a group of hearing people? More than likely such artists, including me, would simply have started drawing in the experiment because they were able to see the other participants doing the activity although they were unaware of any sound whatsoever. Their drawn responses are likely to have no connection to the stimulus. What are the measures

of their success against those that could hear sound? A lack in one sensory area, however, often results in increased acuity in others.

Established in art history are cases of innovation that have origins outside that which might be expected. Often innovation derives from unexpected synergies, from the unexpected challenge of ideas from quite different disciplines. The 2006 *New Ideas about New Ideas* conference is a case in point. Bruce Weinberg notes the considerable work "... on creativity across a wide-range of disciplines, including business, cognitive neuro-science, economics, history, psychology, and sociology" together with the fact that, "until recently there has been little cross-disciplinary interaction." The conference, however, brought

> ... fifteen experts on innovation and creativity from these disciplines – both established senior scholars and emerging younger researchers – [who] met at the National Bureau of Economic Research in Cambridge, Massachusetts with support from the Alfred Sloan Foundation. The purpose of the conference was to foster cross-disciplinary dialogue on creativity and innovation.
>
> http://www.innovationcreativityscience.net/ninilong.htm internet accessed 3 – 1 – 2010

What was of particular interest in the current context was the conference's agreed consensus on the role of idiosyncrasy in creativity and innovation as Weinberg (2006) acknowledges:

> Our working definition of creativity was the production of novel and useful ideas or artifacts and the discussion touched on the arts, industry, and sciences. Perhaps the single point on which there was the widest agreement was that while there are recognizable patterns in creativity, the motivations of creators and the processes by which creative ideas arise are frequently specific to the individual or idiosyncratic. The idiosyncratic nature of innovation showed up in brain images; in problem-solving experiments, and in analyses of historical and contemporary innovations and innovators. Participants were optimistic about our ability to fostering creativity. However, we agreed that, to be successful, efforts will have to confront the idiosyncratic nature of creativity.
>
> http://www.innovationcreativityscience.net/ninilong.htm
>
> internet accessed 3 - 1 - 2010

One example of such an innovator in painting was the French Artist Paul Cezanne (1839 – 1906) whose search for form within portraits, landscape and still life ruptured most of the normal taught models. In doing so, he was able to develop within his praxis a modulation in painting to render his optical sensations and thus

vastly increase the understanding of form and perspective in painting. There is considerable evidence of artists who experience the world differently also tending to be innovators in their fields of interest in art. For example, the French painter Mary Cassatt (1844 - 1926) was innovative in the way she depicted women in the late eighteen-century given that

> Failing eyesight and bouts of poor health deterred Cassatt from producing art for many of her last years. When she did find strength and the motivation, she like Degas was inspired to work in the pastel medium, in part because of the love of the medium, and in part because it did not require the efforts of painting. While there were times when she could hold a stick of pastel for less than an hour a time, she persevered to produce at least eight pastels. Seven were delivered to Paul Durand-Ruel in October of that year, and in December she wrote to Louisine Havemeyer that 'they were in many aspects the best of I have done, more freely handled & in brilliant colour'. (Barter, 1998: 222 - 23)

Cassatt argued that, despite her illness, she produced her best works during this period. and that they were freely handled which demonstrates that a disability (including failing eyesight) does not necessarily mean that the sophistication of her visual memory is diminished or impaired. It is possible that Cassatt's failing eyesight gave her an enhanced capacity to mine through her storehouse of visual memory and to access the luminal nuances from *a priori* praxis in pastels which enabled her to create images that appear to reflect an increased capacity of vision.

Certainly her painting *Mother and Child c. 1914* (see Plate 1.2.1) evidences the sophisticated pastel traces that exemplify calligraphic mark making.

Plate 1.2.1 *Mother and Child* 1914, pastel on tan woven paper mounted on canvas, dimensions none listed by Mary Cassatt, Metropolitan Museum of Art, United States http://www.theathenaeum.org/art/display_image.php?id=17561 internet accessed 20 - 6 - 2007

This is evidenced in the long white pastel mark from the top of the mother's skull that starts close to the child's head. On the mother's head the pastel mark beginnings are thinnest; when it proceeds across the skull, it gains slight thickness. When the pastel enters the other side of the face it gains increasing thickness, coinciding with the artist shifting the pastel onto the side that will increase the thickness of the mark. After proceeding down the side of the face, the pastel trace tapers off. This is achieved through the actions of applying pastel from one visual memory because we can see the physical evidence in the artwork; as the visual remembrance embodies one mark rather than several, it is reasonable to assume that it is a singular vision.

Juxtaposed to this calligraphic vision is Cassatt's painting *Tea c.1880/81* which bears all the hallmarks of a trained memory searching for the form of the hat and not the original sensation. The evidence of the trained tradition in painting can be seen in the series of brush marks that are searching for the form of the hat through light short

traces of pinks, rose pinks, purplish blue crimsons and burnt sienna rose madder. There is none of the charge of original vision of the later works, but a more trained arrangement of brush marks, that search out form as evidenced in the peak of the hat over the sitter's forehead. The paint traces are placed side by side, fanning out in the shape of the hat to give the volume, like someone methodically mapping the bottom of glass, as they were instructed to in a drawing class. Therefore the supposed disability has more than likely impacted upon Cassatt's quantity of output but the quality of the work has no doubt been enhanced.

Yet Cassatt is only one artist who has experienced the world differently. Take, for instance, the case of the French painter Auguste Pierre Renoir (1841 - 1919) who was crippled with arthritis. Renoir's arthritis can be clearly evidenced in a photograph of himself and Aline c.1910; his left hand is contorted and deformed, the knuckles are swollen and fingers pushed inwards towards the palms as though crushed in a vice. Despite the arthritis that incapacitated his fingers and hands as well as being immensely painful, he painted a portrait of Ambrose Vollard seven years later, when no doubt the condition would, more than likely, have worsened. Yet this is reputed to be one of Renoir's best paintings even though he did not have much dexterity in his fingers any more. The painting is *Ambroise Vollard Dressed as a Toredor* c. 1917 which Distel (1997) claims to be highly meritorious:

> Renoir's last portrait, and one of the greatest works in his oeuvre, *Ambroise Vollard as a Toreador* is painted with an exuberance and technical assurance that belie the septuagenarian's infirmities and progressive enfeeblement. (Distel, 1997: 262)

Not only does Distel (1997) comment on Renoir's age as a incredible measure of the brilliance of the painter, despite the frailties of his health, but also he observes closely the painted forensic details on the public surfaces from the draped motif:

> The intricacies of Vollard's apparel are meticulously described: the fringes and the tassels dripping from the bolero and culottes; his scarlet bola, slightly akew; and his fetching red hose, painted in fine parallel brush strokes. (Distel, 1997: 262)

Again there is the evidence of another artist who experiences the world differently; presenting the community with a original vision and expanding the tolerance boundaries of what an image might be.

Yet, as acknowledged earlier, such artists might not be able to complete the tasks typically set in a life drawing class. Acknowledged innovative artists like Francisco Goya (Meniere's disease), Vincent Van Gogh (Meniere's disease/deafness), Toulouse Lautrec (deformity), Claude Monet (cataracts) Eugene Delacroix (serious throat condition) Henri Matisse (acute intestinal illness) Mike Parr (arm amputation) are but a few examples.

1.2.1 A sense of tradition in the painted vision: shackles and liberation

Since educational institutions have developed, traditions in painting have been passed down to aspiring artists by the collective authority embodied in art schools. In the introduction to Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Seven Discourses on Art* delivered to celebrate the inauguration of the Royal Academy of Arts, the point is made that

> The principles laid down by him will never fail to give strength to the right artist, or true guidance towards the appreciation of good art, though here and there we may not wholly assent to some passing application of them, where the difference may be great between a fashion of thought in his time and in ours.
>
> (http://www.authorama.com/seven-discourses-on-art-1.html - internet accessed 3 – 1 – 2010

While these principles have universal application across time, there may be a danger in that their apparent immutability may militate against the exercise of individual perception.

A long tradition of artistic aesthetic facilitation has maintained itself with these techniques of form, perspective and tone as aesthetic measures. These principles later crossed the channel to France and were championed by the French painter William Bouguereau (1861-1905). Bouguereau had enormous power and could make or break artists given his control of the French Salon. With a favourable comment, he could

allow painters to proceed successfully into the official French taste of the state's gallery and reap the financial rewards of being exhibited in this most prestigious space on the basis that they had mastery of certain techniques.

Aesthetic painting measures to control imagery were maintained for centuries, regardless of the fact that not all artists experienced the world within that specific paradigm of art. The most obvious historical challenge to official taste was that by the French Impressionists who confronted Bouguereau's authoritarian control of the Salon with a series of exhibitions in the eighteen seventies, much to the distaste and support of the French public as Rachman (1997) points out:

> The History of Impressionism has often been described as a titanic struggle of talented artists against a blindly conventional art world, and accounts of this first exhibition of 1874 have tended to sound hostile. In fact this was not the case; the concept of an independent show organized by artists was widely welcomed and, although it made a small loss financially, it was moderately successful in terms of attendance. The general tenor of the reviews was positive if mistrustful and even reviewers who disliked many of the pictures seem to have shared feelings of Léon de Lora, writing in Le Gualois: 'Their efforts deserve to be encouraged'. Some public criticism was more pointed, and the association between artist darling and political radicalism was hinted in several reviews. The founders of the group were called 'rebels', 'insurgents' and intransigents'- all terms which were loaded with meaning in a frail Third Republic, not long after the conclusion of a vicious civil war. The style of the pictures, and the manner of their

> exhibition, without jury or medals, did constitute a challenge to tradition, authority and the *status quo*. (Rachman, 1997: 107 - 8)

It is noteworthy that the independent remembrances of the artist have not always been unappreciated by the public by (Rachman, 1997). More than likely, independent painterly memories will be tolerated and embraced as history has so often shown through artists likes Paul Cézanne. But what can happen at the time is that those in positions of influencing taste prefer not to lose their power, and therefore may judge the new vision in painting little worthy of merit and thus attempt to render it powerless.

In the contemporary context the catch-cry seems to be that painting is irrelevant or dead as argued in Storr's (2003) essay entitled *Thick and thin - painters and curators discuss the state of painting in the last two decades.* Certainly, the traditions of good painting are maintained as is evidenced in the art collection policies of major art galleries. These policies also indicate that they also seek innovation in art as may be verified from the shifting nature of painted imagery chronicled in major art gallery collections like the Tate in London. Within such major galleries the artworks of the masters and subsequent innovations coexist. As Kimmelman (1999) observes,

> Brunelleschi's little painting was a parlor trick, really, but perspective reflected a new and serious artistic ambition: the notion that an artist could create a microcosm of nature on a piece of paper or wood or canvas. Perspective ushered in the age of science in art.

> From Brunelleschi you can trace a line to Leonardo, Vermeer, Courbet, Eakins, Degas, Seurat, Muybridge, Rodchenko, Albers, LeWitt, Smithson, Turrell: artists for whom art, to a significant degree, became an investigative tool, an extension of the tangible world, a representation of the cosmos grounded in technological, mathematical, botanical, astronomical, optical and other rationalist ideas.
>
> http://www.nytimes.com/1999/04/18/magazine/best-innovation-in-painting-everything-in-perspective.html?pagewanted=1 internet accessed 6 – 1 – 2010

Yet others see art somewhat differently, valuing qualities other than innovation. For example, Brown (personal communication , 2004) argued that Claude Monet was irrelevant as a painter compared with a painter like Euan Uglow (1932 - 2000) whom he regards as of greater substance; yet surely there are dangers in comparing the painted vision of Monet to that of a copyist such as Uglow. Monet created a completely innovative vision in painting. Against the collective traditions in painting established by Reynolds and Bouguereau, there will always be the independent synthesis of individual artists to liberate the individual artist from the potential millstone of tradition.

1.3 Consonance and Dissonance: Different ways of experiencing the world

People do not experience the world in the same way due to the retention of memories that come from the experiences gained through cultural, religious or physical events throughout their life. Any particular action by an artist can causes a ripple effect, spreading outwards and engaging objects living or static; there is thus a consequence that stems from the registration of the meeting. The memory of the consequence is unique to its reception by the artist. The secondary event from the first action cannot be measured accurately because not everyone will receive the consequences of the action in the same way due to the nature of delay in recognition and people's differential reception of events from the external world.

In my case it was having and then not having hearing that no longer articulated the world within the normal paradigm. All of a sudden my world changed; what I was used to suddenly moved dramatically within a week at the age of seven. Art then became a more important component in my life as it was something I could do and wanted to do and that has never changed. But Art has not always been valued within the broader academy. For instance in Grade Five there was a teacher who left the art supplies at the back of the room and never used them; this still remains a very strong memory. This was at a Christian Brothers College in a tough working class neighbourhood with white and immigrant children whose parents had fled the ruins of Europe after World War Two. So, in not hearing the teacher from Grades Five to Seven, drawing hotrods became something I could do well. But drawing hotrods came with the severe price of getting the strap every time I was caught. The strap

was an instrument of real fear, a nasty looking piece of thick hewn leather, delivered by men and dished out with extreme prejudice but it never stopped me drawing.

In secondary school, art training was in the traditions of drawing, as evidenced in Plate 1.3.1, which portrays the image of the catholic priest who was reading on a school holiday camp.

Plate 1.3.1 *Father Mackel*, 1975, Conti on paper, by Peter Davidson, Servite College Year Book 1975

The class was trained to experience art the same way, even though some of us were physically different and no doubt all memories were very different due to the ethnic backgrounds of the students. Instead of having the wealth of memory manifesting itself from the diversity of backgrounds like a cultural fruitcake - tasty, spicy and visually wonderful to encounter - there was only the bleak monotonal vegemite sandwich of the art of perspective, form and tone.

The traditions of form, perspective and tone maintained their authority for most of my artistic training. It was not until postgraduate study that I realised that the traditions of painting and drawing could be used to create a personal synthesis as an artist rather than an aesthetic measure of control for outcomes in art. At that point

painting became my personal vision, that which orchestrated my storehouse of memories.

1.4 Rationale for and Aims of the Study.

The creative nature of the idiosyncratic vision in painting has, in fact, been little documented in contemporary art. In essence this is the artist's sense of ownership of the vision. One such instance is Katsushika Hokusai (1760 – 1849) who rendered, in sumi-e brushwork, Mount Fuji from on site and in his studio, and had a very precise intention that the views of Mount Fuji would be as he experienced them; they are Hokusai's vision and no one else's. How Hokusai manifested that vision was through a system of image making which he realised in his idiosyncratic praxis as an artist.

Personal knowledge of Japan reinforces the recognition that it is extremely difficult to paint solely outdoors through winter. Painting or drawing in an almost motionless state (other than a few intermittent movements per minute) does not keep one warm. Painting outdoors takes some human effort. As proposed by Japanese scholars (for example, Suzuki Juzo's (1972) commentary on Hokusai), Hokusai no doubt did travel, and without doubt, created sketches of those travels but more than likely finished them later from memory reconstituted visions he had encountered on his travels. Smith's (1988) view is that,

> If Hokusai relied largely on his imagination for his views, it of course does not necessarily follow that he was not inspired by places he actually visited

> on his travels in the area around Fuji: it simply means he reconstituted these impressions in a highly personal way. (Smith, 1989: 19)

So the origin of Hokusai's vision has two important memory related traces. The first is that, through his sight, on site directly from the public surfaces of the chosen motif, drawing was created with very little delay in time from the seen vision. The second crucial element of Hokusai's work was the time issue in creating his work back in the studio in downtown Edo (Tokyo) where the influence of other vision/s may or may not have manifested itself into the drawing of Fuji. Yet, insofar as modernism in art is concerned, the issue of time is arguably one of the crucial elements of progressive innovation in painting. For example, in the book entitled *Monet* by Robert Gordon and Andrew Forge (1989), there is a chapter titled *Moment and Duration*. Essentially duration is delay from the initial moment of any activity. Therefore it makes sense that Gordon and Forge (1989) are analysing delay and that this was also concurrent throughout Monet's life with his seen moments and the subsequent delay in his painting.

Thus far in the history of image making, few artists like Hokusai have sought their own personal synthesis of painting in vision. Since the initial objective vision breakthroughs by artists such as Hokusai using delay in rendering Mt Fuji from direct on site studies and in his studio, Claude Monet (1840 – 1926) in the painting of one moment of time, and Paul Cezanne (1839 - 1906) in painting the spectrum of hue, tone and contrast to manifest the objective vision of structure from a chosen motif, the nature of painting the external world through an independent vision has remained relatively unexplored.

Earlier research (Davidson, 1998) has made the case again for the rendering of vision from the external realities of nature, through a system of painting to articulate the idiosyncratic calligraphic vision at the intersection of painting. Using the earlier research as a starting point, the current study observes and traces how time influences the painted calligraphic vision. For example, vision is constantly shifting through time and changing unless suspended in extreme conditions of a relatively unchanging environment, like one's eyes shut in a darkened room. Vision takes in the nature of natural light as it shifts across the public surfaces of a picture plane through time and also makes us aware of our movement in the way visual changes occur against a static object, for instance, driving towards a hill. Therefore it makes sense to paint motifs as they exist through time. However the important realisation so far is the need to create a system of painting that recognizes the idiosyncratic sensations that vision receives, and then encapsulates that memory on to the canvas.

There is no conscious decision either to allow the play of subjectivity or to create a narrative in painting the motif. The subject matter is thus painted as much as is humanly possible in accordance with what the eye sees from the motif's public surfaces as illuminated by light. Hence the calligraphic vision is the nature of the resolution of oil traces that are realised from the artist's praxis into theory throughout the artist's life. Vision and the constant immediacy with which the paint traces are recorded on to the canvas through the activity of painting creates its own sophisticated mark making which ultimately records the vision with a succinct fluency evidenced in many of the master artworks. This research is concerned to explore and document in a systematic way how the vision is achieved through the

work of an individual artist focusing on time and delay. Hence, the overarching aim of the study is:

To probe and document the individual artist's interpretation of the environment through a system of painting from internal realities of vision through time.

Specifically this will involve the visual documentation of the development of a personal calligraphic vision through

- a structured series of time based experiments across a range of visual contexts coalescing with
- the re-evaluation and enhancement of the personal storeroom of the calligraphic vision.

1.5 The Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis consists of fifteen chapters that document a common thread through the artist's calligraphic vision in painting and its subsequent journey from initial youthful beginnings to recently painted images. Chapters One and Two document the researcher's tentative beginnings in becoming an artist against the rigid societal morés that are installed within Australia's societal memory and education systems.

The following three chapters (Three, Four and Five) construct a journey through detailed analysis of personally relevant master painter's artworks within the western tradition and hence key influences upon my synthesis in painterly calligraphic vision,.

These artists encompass the renaissance as well as the twentieth century and include both negative and positive influences thus setting up a juxtaposition of innovation and stagnation in the calligraphic vision. Chapter Six reviews the artist's painterly praxis through examination of early artworks from the nascent calligraphic vision towards its ongoing evolution.

Chapter Seven discusses the methodology of the study from the selection of motifs, locations, mediums to subsequent modifications made in the course of the research. The implementation of the research praxis is discussed in detail in Chapters Eight to Thirteen. Chapter Fourteen presents the resultant exhibition while Chapter Fifteen reflects on the outcomes of the research, its implications and directions for further research.

Chapter 2 Memory/Vision

2.1 The Role of Memory

How often do we think the house or car keys are lost when we have just recently placed them somewhere within a room? How often do we forget something that we have recently done? How often do we drive to a shop without remembering the journey? Often even the names of places, people and events are forgotten quickly. Why is it so hard to recall such things? Maybe it is because automatic actions, while important, are driven by the unconscious and hence are installed in latent memory which does not have the same immediacy as current issues at the forefront of consciousness.

Forgetting is known to play a significant role in our memory (e.g., Bartlett, 1932) In society there are methods of training to make us remember, as in the case of written communication where teachers get students to transcribe words and sentences from the blackboard to their notepads. But in acquiring a method of retention we forget the origins of memory and how we manage it. The procurement of memory is the original engine room of thinking free from the trained memory; it is where we think laterally to solve a problem, the solution of which is elusive. In the case of a child's first drawings about the family, the resolutions in colour and line describing the parents are unrestrained recall from the child's memory (vision) and nearly always fascinating to the viewer as a result of the high amount of originality in the drawing.

However forgetting proceeds hands in hand with learning how to master a skill. Yet the important point is that the process towards the skill, the original thinking in achieving mastery and expertise, often tends to be lost. How many times does one invent a strategy in trying to learn to ride a bike as a child, starting with leaning against a wall to balance, a friend holding the bike steady, getting on a box and trying to stabilize oneself etc; these types of learning are important to the acquisition of the necessary skill. However, once having mastered the art of learning to riding a bike, the useful tools in the acquisition of riding skill are soon forgotten, disappearing into influenced memory.

Forgetting in memory is rapid and continues as a result of the interference of other sensations and thoughts as explained by D'Amato (1970):

> How then do we account for the 15 to 25 percent forgetting that does occur over 24 hr after learning of a single list in a laboratory? Underwood and Ekstrand (1968b) have suggested that it is due to interference, but not to interference involving individual items within the list in the sense of specific response competition. As alternatives they suggest generalized competition of a sort espoused by Postman or non-specific sources of unlearning occurring during retention interval suggested by Keppal. (D'Amato, 1970: 633)

As D'Amato (1970) has pointed out, retention of memory becomes an integral part of our unlearning but what is retained? Husserl (1964) argues that

> Retention itself is not an 'act' but a momentary consciousness of the phase which has expired and, at the same time a foundation for the retention consciousness of the next phase. Since each phase is retentionally cognizant of the preceding one, it encloses in itself, in a chain of mediate intentions, the entire series of retentions which have expired. (Husserl, 1964: 161 - 162)

So each independent mode of learning sits in a chain of sequential events within memory. For example, these micro memories (retention) of a child innovating a personal system of riding a bike are vitally important in the genesis of the skill. However, as pointed out, once the system has morphed into a method of riding the bike, which I will call the macro idea or method, the micro memory is forgotten. No longer are the micro memories necessary as they have been overtaken by a macro memory based on performative outcomes and learned through repetition. The innovation the child has learned is now forgotten because it no longer has immediate use.

2.2 The Biology of Memory

Living human memory cannot, as yet, be controlled through simulated biological interference but remains temporary and fragile. So, for the time being, memory seems to be free from direct control. But what happens when it is attainable, susceptible to external control? For example, Miller (1966) makes a paradoxical statement about the freedom of speech:

> We have learned that the freedom of speech is good, but we are convinced that someone is using it for evil ends. What do we do? (Miller, 1966: 292)

Fortunately biological control is in the future, and freedom of speech is still attainable. But no doubt in the future, the control of freedom of speech may be annulled through the control of biological memory. The events of history are littered with desires to exercise control over populations.

Memory rarely delivers the complete experience, especially in relation to the complexities of experience. From the original sensations (experience), memory loss starts almost the moment that any empirical data is received from the external world. This diminution of memory from the original sensation fragments through time and, like anything created, is subject to wear and tear. Once a sensation becomes a memory, it encounters the remembrances of other sensations, thus creating a cascade effect on the newly received memory such that it ceases to be the same impression or remembered as the same experience. Officially history is societal memory, but it is also subject to the fallibility of individual memory. All we know so far is that memory cannot be controlled by any external biological influence that someone desires to implant for control. What we can see is memory's activities externalised and the ongoing retention of these activities (memories) externally exhibited to represent the role of memory. Talland (1968) explains that

> You can think of retention in the sense of a vessel or a living organism holding fluid, or alternately in the sense of a growing tree

> retaining its shape. In regard to learning and memory the first metaphor is misleading, since neither the behavioural nor the neural scientist can point his finger to anything that could leak through a crack. Very likely there are changes in the brain tissue whenever something is learned or memorized, and such changes are lasting in their effects yet susceptible to erosion, but no one knows where to find them. The behavioural scientist infers retention from its observable effects, somewhat like the shape of a tree from its silhouette that intervenes between registration or acquisition and recall or recognition, though hardly as a continuous process in the senses in which he must account for these performances. (Talland, 1968: 48)

There are many types of memory generated through the senses such as touch, sight, taste, smell and hearing. Once these external qualities of life become memories, the loss of the original depends on the retention and subsequent interference through time upon the sensations received. The *status quo* thus far is the richness of these memories that are externalised into acts of poetry, paintings and performance exhibiting the extensive tapestry that resides within biological memory.

It is such tasks that memory externalises from thought into actions that make a painting. The tasks in this synthesis can be identified as sighting the motif, making choices of how an artwork will be made from the subject matter chosen and the kind of actions that are now seen as traces of human creativity. It would be illogical to regard one of the tasks from memory as more important than any other; it may well

be better to accept these human actions as the synthesis of the artist. Whether they be trained marks or random, these actions have an aesthetic history which has been shown to be varied and this echoes memory because everyone is different, albeit to a lesser extent if trained within a narrow conduit to conform to sameness.

2.3 The taught artistic vision

Traditions in painting have long been a source of contraction to the artist's vision (memory) in terms of empirically painted and observed data from the public surfaces (those surfaces that only the eye can see) of the external world towards the application of a measure to generate aesthetic quality. Aesthetics as an individual measure (the idea of beauty or ugliness) can only be an individual, not a collective one, as it has developed throughout painting's history. There are the exhibited traditions of measure in painting such as form, tone and perspective as well as the subjective measures of aesthetic taste.

For example, the English writer/painter John Ruskin (1819 - 1900) stated that painting should be about the sublime beauty of nature. An example of Ruskin's approach to painting can be seen in his appraisal of the English painter Richard Wilson (1713 - 82) as cited by Waterhouse (1994):

> One cannot sum this up more clearly than by quoting Ruskin's words that with 'Richard Wilson the history of sincere landscape art founded on a meditative love of nature begins in England'. (Waterhouse, 1994: 222)

Essentially it was Ruskin's memory (vision) of sublime beauty in nature and no one else's. Hence such statements tend to discount other artists' syntheses of the landscape. Ruskin maintained his aesthetic and had enormous influence on English thinking and painting through his book titled Modern Painting (Ruskin: 1843), often to the detriment, even unfair demise of original vision (memory). The most obvious exhibition of Ruskin's contractual thinking resulted in a court case. James Whistler (1834 - 1903) sued Ruskin for libel over comments he made in a review of his work *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The falling Rocket, 1875* (Plate 2.3.1) at the first Grosvenor Gallery exhibition in London. In Ruskin's periodical *Clavigera* in July 1877, he wrote of this painting that

> For Mr. Whistler's own sake, no less than for the protection of the purchaser, Sir Coutts Lindsay ought not to have admitted works into the Gallery in which the ill-educated conceit of the artist so nearly approached the aspect of wilful imposture. I have seen, and heard much of the Cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public face. (Spencer, 1990: 23)

Plate 2.3.1 *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The falling Rocket*, 1875, oil on panel, 60.3 h x 46.6 w by James Whistler 1834 – 1903 Detroit Institute for the Art. http://www.dia.org/collections/AmericanArt/pages/tonalism/t2B.html internet accessed 19 - 2 - 2008

While it would be fair to acknowledge that, in many ways, Ruskin was right in some of his critical comments, this had more to do with the economics of art in Victorian London at the time. Ruskin stated, in his case against Whistler, that the objective of the artist should be a *"clearness and justice of the ideas they contained and conveyed"* (Spencer, 1990: 23). Whistler did render the painting in the Impressionist manner and borrowed one idea in the artwork from the Japanese artist Ando Hiroshige (1797 - 1858) whose ideas in painting were still new in Britain. So, unlike the British artist William Turner (1775 - 1851) whom Ruskin praised for his innovation in painting, he should have seen *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The falling Rocket, 1875* for what it was, a new sensation to add to the British aesthetic. Ruskin ought to have remained objective to the painting and not personal in his criticism. As it was, the court case centred around the idea of beauty as differently envisaged by Ruskin and Whistler.

Spencer (1990) uses transcripts from the court case to give a sense of the debate and issues:

> Later, Whistler was again cross – examined by the Attorney – General: 'You have made the study of your art your study of your lifetime. What is the particular beauty of that picture?'
>
> W: 'It is impossible for me to explain to the beauty of the picture of that picture, any more than for a musician to explain to you the beauty of harmony in a particular piece of music if you had no ear for music. I could make it clear to any sympathetic painter, but I do not think I could to you. I have known unbiased people, comparatively ignorant of art, express the opinion that it represents fireworks in the night sky'.
>
> AG: ' Do you think that anybody looking at the picture might fairly come to the conclusion that it had no particular beauty?'
> W: 'I have strong evidence that Mr Ruskin came to that conclusion that there was no particular beauty in the picture.'
>
> AG: 'Do you think it fair that Mr. Ruskin came to that conclusion?'
>
> W: 'What might be fair to Mr Ruskin I can't answer. No artist of culture would come to that conclusion.' (Spencer, 1990: 96)

Whistler was correct in asserting that beauty could only be a matter of independent judgement in the sense that Ruskin could only deliver his personal measure. Therefore Ruskin, having published a misleading document in art criticism, forthrightly resigned his Oxford Professorship. Whistler, for his part, received only *one farthing* in compensation although, through his pursuit of Ruskin in the British courts for libel, he became almost penniless.

The late English art critic Peter Fuller (1947 - 1990) (the founder of the Modern Painters Journal) supported Ruskin and invented a phrase called *Theoria,* that encapsulated the higher aesthetic to which artists should aspire. Fuller (1998) explained this singular idea into a book titled, *Theoria and the Absence of Grace*. As there is no first hand evidence of a higher aesthetic, there could thus be no proof that it exists, other than as his theoretical phrase for a measure of control. For example, what is grace? Who has it in their painting and who controls the borderline where images might coalesce into the paradigm known as grace? For instance, there are graceful footballers, graceful dancers, graceful swimmers, graceful colours and forms. Grace is a measure of independent phenomena from memory (sensation) and that is all. Concepts like *grace* and *beauty* are creations of individual minds in much the same way as the clichéd statement that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. One creation of beauty is not the same as that of another. So it is with aesthetic judgment. One critic's delight may well bedevil another.

Fuller's (1998) concept of *Theoria* is essentially at odds with tangible exhibited controls instilled through centuries of art academies from other artists' innovations

from memory (vision) in their painting. For example, Wark (1970) observes that Sir Joshua Reynolds's sixteen discourses of art

> ... were prepared as formal lectures to the students and members of the Royal Academy. They were delivered, at each year and later every other year, on the occasion of the annual prize giving, from the establishment of the academy in 1769 until Reynolds left in 1790. Read by the president before his colleagues and students the Discourses were tantamount to a statement of policy for the young institution. (Wark, 1970: xvi)

These teaching methodologies used in the academies of art were developed from other artists' systems to realise their vision (memory) and can be seen in the application of form, tone and perspective in their artworks. One of the earliest innovations is one point perspective evidenced in the Second Style wall painting from *Cubiculum M of the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor, Boscoreale, Italy. Ca 50-40B.C* The issue is that these artists, who were innovators of form and perspective, more than likely never intended their systems of vision (memory) to be used as a measure for someone else's vision (memory) as control, as evidenced in Sir Joshua Reynolds's discourses. They were simply the individual syntheses of artists turned into a technique for others painstakingly or slavishly to follow and teach.

Perspective, tone and form can be used to enhance one's own vision (memory). For example, artists can use traditional methods to animate ideas within their own systems of painting, with the taught performative outcomes of painting being used as a collective measure exhibited as an example of good painting which has only

achieved imagery that contracts to history. Matisse encountered the powerful French artist/teacher William Bouguereau from the École des Beaux-Arts and President of the Société des Artistes, who said to him: *"Aha so you don't understand perspective! Never mind, you will learn"* (Courthion: 13) echoing the traditional aesthetic measure. It is interesting to note that Bouguereau blocked the French painter Paul Cézanne's applications to the official Solan for twenty years. (Spalding, 2000: 64) It is also noteworthy that, while Bouguereau is acknowledged today, he is not accorded any of the accolades which Cézanne receives through international retrospectives and other such forms of recognition.

Even when Matisse began a system to articulate his vision (memory) in drawing through using his finger to rub out, he was contracted to the approved aesthetic methodologies at the time:

> Matisse, who never forgot having been ticked off, as a new boy in his first drawing class for rubbing out with his finger instead of using a clean rag, and for placing his drawing too high on the page,. Bouguereau told him crossly that he couldn't draw and would never learn. The problem was that Matisse was unable or unwilling to follow Bouguereau's attempt to explain academic principles of enhancement, which involved smoothing out any defects in the model, endowing the human figure with classical authority or presence, picking out the highlights and setting off the whole against a dark ground worked over by a fine badger brush. Success in the Beaux-Arts examinations

> (virtually guaranteed for any candidature backed by Bouguereau) depended on following these standard procedures. (Spalding, 2000: 66)

Bouguereau's credo was a methodology gleaned and adapted from other artists' innovative vision (memory) and applied as the archetypal measure as Barron (1998) explains:

> A second method of learning to identify categories has been called a prototype abstraction. The idea is that people form some sort of stereotype, or prototype of the ideal member of each category. (Barron, 1998: 81)

Later in life, after he had thrown off the controls placed upon him by the ateliers, Matisse stated, in reference to the particular methodology of teaching students in art schools, that

> An atelier of students reminds me of Brugel's Parable of the Blind in which the teacher would be the first blind man leading the others. (Flam, 1990: 77)

Evidence from the preceding argument suggests that art methodologies taught to facilitate student's work might be regarded as no more than techniques, acquired from other artists' innovations created through systems of painting to realise a vision (memory) in art. Perspective and form are the ideal trained memory (vision) that artists have more or less received in one form or another in their lifetime. However it

is essential to remember that, in teaching students, one could also learn something from them. Disappointingly, insofar as history has documented it, this does not appear to be the case; it seems that the traditions of painting are still taught on the basis that good aesthetics are handed down in a one way transaction.

To throw off these shackles of control traditionally received through taught historical methodologies in art often requires thorough research into its origins. In other cases it can be achieved, as evidenced by Cassatt and Renoir, through their idiosyncratic sensations (memory). The rejection of established painting values freed the American painter Jackson Pollock (1912 - 56) as did the compromised sensation (memory) exhibited in Claude Monet's artworks, as he did not paint the light breaking away, realised from the motif but choose to paint one moment of it. If the painter accepts original vision (memory), then subsequent artistic statements must equal the intentionalities of the paint traces. More often than not, this is not the case for many artists.

In visiting an exhibition at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery at the University of Western Australia titled *In Abstract*, I was struck by a bewildering display of supposedly abstract paintings. Somewhat mimetic of the New York style of imagery, they were exhibited without any qualification in a substantial manifesto by the artists themselves of why this particular vision (memory) was unique to them. Nor did the curators provide this, as Bromfield (2002) laments:

> At this point in history and a detailed forensic analysis of the individual works *In Abstract* would produce a full account of their emergence. It

would then be possible to trace the multi-variant scripts of desire that can be 'found' within one work bound together by incompletion. This however would require a thesis and much research. Enough has been said to show that a thorough going non-essentialist account of these works, the emergence and relationships is possible.

It remains to stress once more the hopeless irrelevance of the striptease calculus of sensibility, form and essence, through which *In Abstract* has been structured. There are some magnificent works in this show but they are about the here and now, about what we really, really want. (Bromfield: 2002, 1)

So, in viewing this particular exhibition, I was left struggling as to the nature of these artists' independent synthesis in the works. Did one rely on some metaphysical phenomenon from the Gods of Abstraction to perform some paranormal locution (this is when a spirit takes over your being to guide you in some way, as defined in Catholic doctrine) to enlighten the viewer on what was being viewing or just simply guess? The point is that, unless there is a clear statement that equals the paint traces, images then seem to fail. For example Landay (1989) observes Pollock's work:

When Clement Greenberg (undoubtedly one of the 'foremost critics' cited above) reviewed the 1947 annual exhibition of the American Abstract Artists group around this time, he complained that 'that not one is bold, extravagant, pertinacious or obsessed'; obviously, he was measuring the participants against the new standard set by Pollock, for

> all of the adjectives perfectly describe the latter's new approach. Hanging on the wall of the Parsons Gallery at 15 West Fifty Street were the thirteen new canvases the like of which New York had never seen. Pollock's freely admitted total retrenchment from traditional methods of oil painting was patently obvious in such works as *Galaxy, Lucifer,* and *Full Fathom Five*. (Landay, 1989: 169)

Pollock's statement is consistent with his paint traces. Pollock suffered from the disease of alcoholism. However, what influence this had upon his vision (memory) and subsequent paintings would be hard to determine. No doubt there were effects and they and may even have released him from the traditions of painting towards his own calligraphic horizon in image making.

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Monet achieved liberation through a complete avoidance of his own sensations. In the catalogue essay written for my exhibition at Perth Galleries in October 2002, I explained Monet's process of liberation thus:

> More interestingly Monet describes Object Painting's (elaboration on this proto-type of painting innovated will be later) realisation here in a letter to his wife Alice: [...] I am working like a madman, alas whatever use say, I am finished and no longer good for anything. Everything is breaking away at the same time: the weather is not stable: yesterday there was bright sun, this morning it was foggy, this afternoon the sun disappeared just when I needed it: tomorrow it will be dark-grey or it

> might rain. Once more I am afraid to give up everything and have to pick up again suddenly. (Davidson, 2002: 2)

Yet Monet did nothing about the sensation he had received from the empirical observation of nature's light. Moreover he had tried to compromise his sensation by placing a sequential series of canvasses together and painting them as specific moments of time, such as evening or morning. Object Painting collapses all these sensations into a single image from visual memories onto a canvas; this is painting and time travel.

Monet achieved modernism through the delayed sensation of painting directly from the motif and recalling that sensation (vision) in the studio. The original sensation received through painting directly from the haystacks exhibited the trained idea of form and perspective. In the studio Monet over-painted with his sensations of memory (vision) of enveloping light around the haystack. The overlaid painted sensations by Monet ruptured the original form, flattening it and presenting the viewer with a formless haystack. The English critic Kenneth Clark (1976) confirms this:

> But in order to prove a point he chose subjects for his experiments, Cathedrals and Haystacks. No doubt he did so intentionally, to show that the most articulate works of man, and the most formless, were pictorially of equal importance. (Clark 1976: 177)

So, simply by avoiding his sensations, Monet created a prototype in painting and his success disrupted the shackles of tradition. But this can be achieved in another way by examining the utterances and methodologies of a painter. In my case it was through investigation into the English painter William Coldstream (1906 - 87) who had coined the phrase "Measured Exactitude". The methodology Coldstream used was intended to be representative of his vision (memory) as David Sylvester (1990) recorded in an interview with Coldstream:

> Well, the technique of measuring is quite simple. It's an old idea: you look at what your painting and hold your pencil or brush out in the plane — in the picture plane, you see — and I say you out your arm straight out and hold the brush up vertically and mark off with one eye shut — as if you were shooting a little bit. Of course it doesn't make sense, because in any ordinary projection you can't really trust and you can't use central perspective for instance, in measuring like that. I mean, if you're sitting seven or eight feet away from the model you have a different picture plane when you're looking up or down, you don't look straight forward, so the thing doesn't really join up. It doesn't really make sense. But what I mean is quite literally holding a pencil up with one eye shut and marking it off in it. (Gowing, 1990: 15)

Coldstream's admission that he understands the flux of his own vision (memory) and the avoidance of the necessity to engage it by locking himself into a historical technique of painting did not make his painting an original prototype. Coldstream's art was simply just tinted; more specifically it was like getting an old red car and

then changing the hue to blue. By Coldstream's own admission, he owes his technique to Cézanne, as Gowing (1962) reports:

> He went to the Slade when he was eighteen in 1926. 'There we were supposed to draw like Leonardo da Vinci and Ingres. Painting was taught in the Velazquez-Manet tradition, that is to say painting by tones.' More importantly, 'I discovered Cézanne and the other late nineteenth- century French masters. Their work was a revelation to me …' But what they revealed to him was the reverse of what the twentieth century had found in Cézanne. 'I became very interested in real appearances and started from nature… every attempt at realistic painting, however crude, was for me a discovery'. (Gowing, 1962: 5)

In Coldstream's painting *Westminster X* 1982 – 3 Plate 2.3.2 there is, in the towers, evidence of Cézanne's vision (memory) from his artwork *The Village of Gardanne* (see Plate 2.3.3)

Plate 2.3.2 *Westminster X 1982 - 3*, oil on canvas, 60.9 cm h x 40.6 cm w by William Coldstream (1908 – 87), Private Collection http://www.bridgeman.co.uk/about/collections.asp?type=cBridgeman%20Artists%20Copyright%20Service&topic=303 internet accessed 25 - 7 - 2008

Plate 2.3.3 *The Village at Gardanne*, 1885 - 86, oil on canvas, 36 1/4 x 29 3/8 in. (92.1 cm x 74.6 cm).by Paul Cézanne (1839 – 1906) Brooklyn Museum, Ella C. Woodward Memorial Fund and the A.T. White Memorial Fund, 23.105 http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/collections/european_art/images/23.105_542.jpg internet accessed 5 - 8 - 2008

In nearly fifty years of painting Coldstream never came close to dealing in "real appearances" as he stated; throughout his whole life he was methodically wedded to

the style of painting derived from Cézanne's system in rendering an image and never dealt with the complexities of his own vision (memory).

Coldstream's measured exactitude methodology in painting, derivative of Paul Cézanne's personal synthesis in painting, was the origin of my postgraduate interest. But essentially the painting methodology was not equal in the intentionalities of the paint traces to which William Coldstream and his copyists Euan Uglow (1932 - 2000) and Patrick George (1923 -), all professors at the Slade School of Art, maintained a life-long adherence. It might be argued that Coldstream and the copyists of his painterly idea did not actually do anything different in creating imagery that may be considered innovative, contrary to their utterances about art. In an earlier paper (Davidson, 1998), the current researcher argued that

> It is instructive to compare Uglow's work with Cézanne's painting, *Still Life with Apples and Pears, c.1883*. One notices the instant richness of colour that Cezanne has sensed from the motif. The painted apple on the dish has colour changes from red, red oranges, peach tones, green yellow, all on one apple with the reflection of the pale blue sky, along with light cobalt blue greens and very light blue greys. The navy grey outline of the apple records change. This may be because of the shrinkage of the apple from decomposition. Cézanne's view from the motif changed in relationship to where he has set up his easel. Only one of these realisations is in Uglow's still life, which are the markings of the decomposition of the perishable subject matter. Uglow tries to recreate that fraction of a second in the motif, to illustrate something in suspended animation. This is unlike

Monet's Impressionism, where he would load the momentary flux of life itself into one canvas. This was a singular process similar to the traditional painted genre of still life not to the freshness of each moment's glance, as Cézanne has done.

Since Uglow adheres to the notion of measured exactitude, clinging tightly to Coldstream's theory, then changes in anything within the picture plane must be recorded. That not only means the markings of edges but of hue and tone of light. None of this is recorded in Uglow's painting. As Harry Blacker observed:

> The plastic flour - sifter in Flour Man shifted every noon: with increase in temperature the plank on which the sifter stood swelled slightly. Uglow's art relies upon exact measurement. The slightest change of position throws out all the relationships in the composition. How then can perishable fruit be subjected to lengthy observation? (Blacker, 1986) (Davidson, 1998: 41)

Yet the exactitude model of painting methodology can be very seductive. I liked it immensely resulting in the best birdsong imagery I've experienced but it can become a tad boring. Although there is an appealing methodological effect in the way the traces of exactitude markings are left for the audience to see, this has now become something more to do with a matrix in subsequent painting research What became interesting was the discovery of Object Painting through the idea of wanting to paint in the Coldstream measured exactitude methodology in the course of post-graduate research (Davidson, 1998).

In essence the focus of the research was deliberate replication in order to probe the limits of the methodology. This differs from the vision of a recent honours student exhibiting at the Kurb Gallery in Northbridge, W.A. who, when questioned about the conceptual basis for his exhibition, simply replied "I wanted to find a good gallery". It took almost half an hour of repeating the same question to him in different ways to find out that he actually had an idea in painting. It took some time for him to realize that his art had origins, that he was trying to glean from those *a priori* artistic concepts, and that his capacity to make them different and unique to his personal synthesis as an artist was important. So, in hindsight, as much as the 1998 research was constrained by the application of the limited methodology, the research proved valuable through the discovery of Object Painting from the research praxis of measured exactitude.

Apart from the ways in which Object Painting manifested itself from questioning the praxis to theory of *measured exactitude,* the phenomenon of vision (memory) is evident in my paint traces. Object Painting was a relatively new concept (although it had its origins in Cezanne's theories) and has no other obvious prototype in terms of the historical paradigm of art. But then again my experiences of the world were not part of the norm, so it was not unusual to move to an art form that brought in a new sensation (memory) of how the world could exist. This experience of independent vision (memory) was essentially the relationship of all the other artists, who had some part of the anatomy not as functional as that of the normal population. Did it really matter to them if they created new vision (memories) in art that existed outside the paradigm of control? Obviously not, as they pursued their painterly vision (memory) with vigour and developed painted calligraphic memory (vision)

throughout their lives (although, as evidence has indicated in the case of Peter Paul Rubens 1577 - 1640, it does happen to those perceived as normal also).

For instance, the beginnings of Object Painting are seen here in this artwork *Eggplant on green and yellow paper, c1996* (Plate 2.3.4) in which the red traces of measured exactitude and my own theory interact, like the advent of formal departure from something old to something new in a painting prototype.

Plate 2.3.4 *Eggplant on green and yellow paper*, 1986 oil on canvas, 25cm h x 45 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -), Collection of the Artist

Nevertheless the painting still contains some of the traditions that were instilled in me throughout my education as a painter. In one sense nothing had changed much from the drawing in 1975 in Plate 1.4.1, such as the perspective of the yellow paper in the foreground, evidenced by the way it recedes accurately backwards. But the visual reality is that the lines are not straight as a result of movement against the static object. In other areas of the art work, another difference is the rendering from the taught traditions of painting's form to the recognition of time, as seen in the turquoise green background where the changing light is most obvious. The

background paper takes on a buckled appearance due to the recognition of changing light instead of the traditional tonally painted method of rendering a reasonable smooth backdrop (the paper). There is in the painting of time in this picture light turquoise, French ultramarine greens, ochre greens, light grey greens tentatively applied without the confidence of a calligraphic memory.

On first contact with a new proto-type of painting from vision (memory), a first contact sensation is raw and unrefined. Pursuing new sensations presents a considerable challenge as it means going against the taught traditions of painting, but nonetheless it was achieved through the belief that this is actually what was being recognized through time and painted that way.

As my confidence grew in painting through time, so did the application of the oil traces grow from the praxis memories but, like the aforementioned *Eggplant* painting, the trained traditions in applying paint in form, tone and perspective remained very strong although the progression towards a calligraphic memory can be evidenced in *Sorrento II c. 1996* in Plate 2.3.5.

Plate 2.3.5 *Sorrento II*, 1996, oil on canvas, 37 cm h x 36 cm w
by Peter Davidson (1958 -), Collection of the Artist

The paint traces in Plate 2.3.5 are thicker and more confidently applied but still, like Cassatt's earlier painting, remain within the confines of the taught traditions of rendering form. For instance in the clouds, the traces are more in keeping with the trained traditions of short brush marks. Even though the short traces are recognizing the way the clouds moved across the sky, had I been more confident in recognition of the shape of the sensation (memory) from the clouds, they may have been more accurately applied in paint in accordance with recognition of the sensation (memory). The steps that painters take towards the calligraphic memory are small and searching; as history has shown, it takes a long time to become masterly in its application. The National Gallery of London comments thus on its official website:

> Cézanne absorbed many influences, including those of Courbet and Manet, in his early years. In his early works he often imitated Courbet, applying thick layers of paint with a palette knife. He later told Renoir that it took him twenty years to realise that painting was not sculpture.
> http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/cgibin/WebObjects.dll/CollectionPublisher.woa/wa/artistBiography?artistID=147 accessed 26 -7 - 2007

Another example is the painting *Mudie's Glass* c.*1996* (Plate 2.3.6) in which the Coldstream measured exactitude markings are no longer to be traced.

Plate 2.3.6 *Mudie's Glass,* 1996 by Davidson (1958 -) oil on canvas, 20.5 cm h x 35 cm w, Collection of Dr. David Bromfield

The painting traces in the background of Mudie's glass are getting longer and more adventurous in the journey towards the calligraphic memory, although it is still very much in its infancy as an idiosyncratic journey of one painter's memory (vision).

It is not so much that this journey is unique to people experiencing the world differently; they have just tended to come to the fore through creating exceptional things. It is difficult to say why people whose physical attributes are outside the normal present the world with new visions in painting. My own experience has more to do with the attitude of people on the other side of the square door who, however inadvertently, keep it bolted in place against such others.

Earlier research (Davidson, 1998) demonstrated that Coldstream's utterances do not equal his paint traces. Perhaps this was because of his authoritarian attitude as evidenced in the Slade School of Art antique room where he is seen (Plate 2.3.7) with his student Neville Weston in the elaborate background.

Plate 2.3.7 *William Coldstream in the Antique room at the Slade School of Art,* The Paintings of William Coldstream, Lawrence Gowing and David Sylvester, Tate Gallery London, 1991, page 11

Here there is evidence that the methodology of formal easel painting, whether it is from a model or a plaster cast as seen in the background of Plate 2.3.7, seemed to be of greater influence than the motif itself. What is also clear, however, is that it is still a very limited sense of rendering vision (memory) objectively from the subject matter.

In late 1998, in speaking to Neville Weston while visiting the university at which he was working part time, he said to me briefly that Coldstream had ruined him as a painter; this response related to his realisation that I had innovated a new proto-type in painting from memory (vision). This statement by Weston is important and it appears he may well be right about Coldstream ruining him as a painter. Like Weston, I had been influenced by Coldstream's methodology of painting but fortunately

worked to realise my own synthesis of vision (memory). Weston's admission that he had failed to realise his vision (memory) as a painter left some intriguing questions as to what happens to trained painters who leave with the taught memory (vision) of the mentor and never manage to escape its shackles.

It is noteworthy that there have been many utterances and statements in art history that echo Weston's statement about a lecturer's enduring influence as intimated here in relation to George Haynes:

> Haynes's first teaching job came only two years after his arrival in Australia. He has since worked intermittently in most of the art schools around Perth, and is held in tremendous esteem by the legions of students who worked under him. (Stringer, 1998: 8)

The point here is that, in Western Australia, George Haynes was and still is an influential figure in painting and many students still use his methodologies to create images. While this is not his fault, it seems the students remain subjugated. Taught methods influenced Matisse but he did not continue to adhere to them, instead adopting them for his synthesis of vision as stated by his son Pierre and reported by Spalding (1998):

> 'He was desperate', said his son Pierre. 'He couldn't understand the academic method, a touch of grey, then a darker one, all their tricks and dodges and then there was Goya.' He said: 'Ah, that I can do'. And his

father went home without having understood anything." (Spalding, 1998: 71)

Students should take responsibility for their painted vision (memory) as they have the choice either to pursue the traditions of painting to the letter or make their own path. If one allows the traditions to shackle one, the consequence is that there can be no memory (vision) in one's painting.

The aesthetic painting authority used by artists such as Coldstream had more to do with control and economic survival than what makes interesting and inclusive art. It must be acknowledged that Coldstream was a man of contradictions in that he did many generous things; one example was the *Coldstream Report* into British Art Education in 1962, which gave a very positive report to the Government of the day. Coldstream's students operated within the demands of his performative outcome in relationship to exhibiting set perspective, form and tone, as Weston was expected to do throughout his early artistic career (see Plate 2.3.7). These teachings have resonated through students into subsequent generations. For instance, Weston (2002) in his review of a recent exhibition, made the comment that

> Though these coastal works sum up the midday feeling of the place they seem to miss the amazing subtleties of the ever changing light. There is still a lot of mileage left in painting the Australian landscape in the old Heidelberg or banks-of-the-Seine manner. (Weston, 2002: 11)

Unfortunately, Weston must have ignored the catalogue given to him by the Gallery owner for, the cover (see Plate 2.3.8), included an illustration of the intentionalities of the proto-type paint traces.

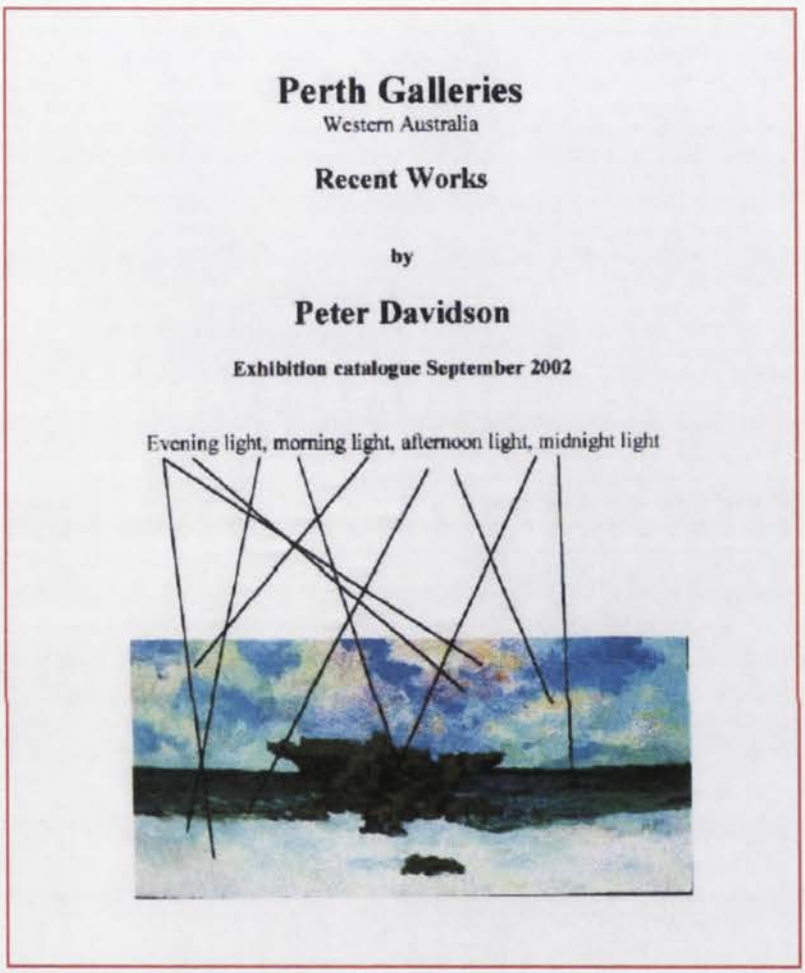

Plate 2.3.8 Peter Davidson Exhibition Catalogue September 2002 Perth Galleries Western Australia

How Weston could have claimed that Plate 2.3.8 was of midday light is inexplicable except perhaps in terms of the fact than his vision had been trained to see in only one way and the evidence of the preceding photographs suggests that this may well be the case. Plate 2.3.8 evidences the acknowledgement of the ever-changing light with the accompanying subtleties and dramatic contrasts that situate themselves into a single synthesis of painted vision (memory). However, Coldstream's facilitation of

artistic performative outcomes that can be measured and controlled does not allow the personal synthesis of the artist to reveal itself.

None of the traditions of art actually help one to see better; Monet, Cézanne and Matisse stand testament against that. All they do is help you see more precisely within a very narrow conduit of aesthetic measure for those behind the square door such as Uglow or Coldstream. If any statement argues against the training of the traditions making you see more accurately within the convention of painting, it is this which Spate (1992) attributes to Cézanne:

> I'm working as never before, on new ventures figures in the open air as I understand them, made as if they were landscapes. It's an old dream which still plagues me, and which at once I like to realize, but its so difficult... it absorbs me so much that I am almost made ill by it. (Spate, 1992: 182)

This resonates around the phrase "***I*** *understand them*", not what anybody else understood them to be. Cézanne maintained a singular vision (memory) with unswerving faith and was not swayed by a taught one.

In 1998 I visited The New South Wales Art Gallery to see the *Classic Cézanne* exhibition. In this particular show was the work *Still life with milk jug and fruit c 1900,* a painting late in his *oeuvre*. It is to be recognised that, at this particular time in Cézanne's life, he was a diabetic, a condition which eventually lead to his early death through pneumonia. In the painting *Still life with milk jug and fruit* there is the evidence of Cézanne's prophetic statement, as "*I understand them*". A visual

examination of the painting *Still life with milk jug and fruit* (see Plate 2.3.9) .reveals an unorthodox painted ellipse on the plate on which the fruit sits on, obviously out of sync with the formal mannerisms of painting traditional form of circular perspective.

Plate 2.3.9 *Still Life with Milk Jug and Fruit*, 46cm x 55 cm, oil on canvas c.1900 by Paul Cézanne, Gift of the W. Averell Harriman Foundation in memory of Marie N. Harriman 1972.9.5, Collection of the National Gallery of Art Washington http://www.nga.gov/cgibin/pimage?52839+0+0+gg84 internet accessed 5 - 9 - 2007

The bottom painted ellipse of the plate in Plate 2.4.8 is entirely apart from the trained painted methodology of meeting the other side evenly, meaning that Cézanne finished the circular ellipse by joining it in a trained mannerism rather than by natural vision. There is a sharp bluish cobalt purple paint trace representing the ellipse which actually ceases to exist visually after it leaves the edge of the first apple on the plate and before it reaches the apple on the plate nearest the milk jug. On the side of the plate that sits in the air, obviously leaning against something on the table, the same ellipse representing the bottom of the plate is far too tight for it to link precisely on the other side of the apples. The outer circumference of the plate on the top section is buckled, representing a sort of distorted vision (memory). The glass behind the fruit on the plate is also disjointed with two almost Prussian blue circular

paint traces but with the side nearest the drapery flattened. Then there is another slightly lightened Prussian blue paint trace jutting up into the air from the bottom of the glass, along the recognized side of the glass towards the top, which is separated away from the flattened prussian blue circular paint traces represented at the top ellipse of the glass. In a traditional painted context this is seen as bad painting, but essentially it was how Cézanne understood his memory (vision) and history has supported his vision.

The traditions of painting can and have hindered many artists as Weston (pers.com., 1998) admitted. Yet surely the issue is that artists should be honest to their vision (memory). In Tomlinson's (1989) book Francois Goya, *The Tapestry Cartoons and the Early Career at the court of Madrid,* there is a quotation from Goya summarizing how artists should be allowed to pursue their vision (memory) by

> ...allowing the genius of the student wishing to learn run the full freedom, without oppression, without imposing methods that corrupt their natural inclinations towards one style or another style of painting. (Tomlinson, 1989: 214)

Hence students of the fine arts should not be taught parroted technicality towards an image outcome but, like Cézanne, with buckles and bends in the plate, to create an idiosyncratic and interesting image.

The current researcher painted investigations into the measured exactitude of the methodologies of Coldstream and thus realised the absence of directness in Coldstream's vision (memory) as elaborated by Davidson (1998):

> While making my painting "*Grape fruit on yellow paper*" I worked through the day and the night. The persistence of my painting studies showed that the yellow background paper took on a distinctively green tinge in the early morning or late afternoon. This recorded in the painting as a series of shifts in colour across the picture plane, which correlated with changes in my relationship to the motif as whole. This was a significant discovery. It was not a conscious position of realisation, but simply that, as Cézanne said, "All things, particularly in art, are theory developed and applied after contact with nature". This experience of the discovery of 'Object Painting' through practice, the revelation of the changing condition of the public surfaces in a chosen motif through the day, is central to my work. The hues of early morning sit next to the colour of afternoon, late in the evening or the middle of the day on the canvas, and this is painted ubiquitously all over the image. Painting a particular moment of hue on an object acknowledges a specific instant of time. The origins of my understanding of Object Painting are in the paradoxes of Coldstream's method but, as a result of this research, my approach is now firmly grounded in Cézanne's painfully and practically articulated realisations. (Davidson, 1998: 9)

Plate 2.3.2 offers a good example of Coldstream's measured exactitude method of painting. For Coldstream's praxis contains all the rigid paint traces of purposively described accurate painted measure as sighted from directly in front of the motif, which did not happen due to the natural nature of the flux of light and the delay in painting from memory.

Within Coldstream's paintings there is a range of markings that are meant to indicate accurately described painted measurement marks but reflect an influence inherited from Cézanne which can be seen near the tower within the village in Plate 2.3.3, and it was significant because he used it as a life-long mannerism in painting, although it had nothing to do with natural vision.

As demonstrated by the current researcher, artists can detach themselves from methods of painting traditions and present an original vision (memory) in artwork that breaks the shackles of fine arts contracted history as revealed in Object Paintings. The idiosyncratic painting journey then continues outwards towards one's own calligraphic horizon - although this is a long and hard process as evidenced in analyses of the artworks of Monet, Cézanne and Pollock.

2.4 The Idiosyncratic Vision

The idiosyncratic vision (memory) of the artist is one that synthesizes beyond the taught memory of the artist. That does not mean that the artist does not use the traditions of painting as these then become simply tools to enhance one's system of painting to be realised in an independent synthesis of vision (memory) as an artwork.

In the painting *House at Pontise*, near Valhermeil by Paul Cézanne there is the development of a very idiosyncratic vision in painting.

Plate 2.4.0 House at Pontise, near Valhermeil (Maisons á Pontoise, prés de Valhermeil) by Paul Cézanne 1882, oil on canvas 73cm h x 93 cm w, private collection http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/2005/cezannepissarro/base.html internet accessed 10 - 10 - 2008

At the time of this painting Cézanne was nearing mid career as a painter and this developing maturity of a painting can be analysed in the middle centre fore ground of the painting, where the first house it situated within the picture plane as seen in the detail of the afore mentioned painting in Plate 2.4.2.

Plate 2.4.1 House at Pontise, near Valhermeil (Maisons á Pontoise, prés de Valhermeil) by Paul Cézanne 1882, oil on canvas 73cm h x 93 cm w, private collection http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/2005/cezannepissarro/base.html internet accessed 10 - 10 - 2008

Within Plate 2.4.2, in the paint marks representing the chimney, there are a several largish light tan pinkish whites presenting a dominate feature within the over painted motif. Underneath the aforementioned traces of vertically placed paint is another series of what could be described as placed in a collard manner in that they are slightly darker bordering on light pale bluish grey which may be the colour of a particular moment from the refraction of the days sky and or clouds. Next to these paint traces and moving downwards with the slantwise slope of the roof and, to the left of the image, is another series of collard paint traces in yellow ochres with hints of pink, late afternoon sun, peach, rose-madder tints, slightly imbued with very soft greyish whites.

In front of this is a series of slantwise darkish cobalt french ultramarine blues, raw umber slightly` shifted in hues towards warm red ochre hues that are intermingled with sap grey-greens and these oil marks give off the sensation of the roof, whilst trying to covey to viewing audience an visual solidarity. In the roof behind the chimney there is another series of marks painted horizontally and, at the top where it meets the base of the chimney, there is a singular dark french ultramarine prussian bluish oil trace placed slantwise left that separates the two distinctly different directional paint marks.

The paint traces that represent the roof next to the singular mark are collard in soft light chocolate hues and, as the horizontal marks proceed downwards, slantwise left, the next series of oil traces are a peach chocolate colour, tinted with yellow ochre in some places and then fade off to soft fawn hues with the nearby foliage of terre-verte dark ultramarine leaves intruding into the roof's picture plane.

Throughout Cézanne's life in painting as he arranged his vision in oil traces on the canvas he had stated 'I proceed very slowly' (Doran, 1978:28) which means much of what he wanted to say and achieve in image making is now left to speculative analysis by historians and artists. But in Cézanne's organisation of the paint traces within Plate 2.4.2 it does reveal the developing system in painting that is starting to exhibit his idiosyncratic vision.

2.5 The Shaping of the Artist

In this journey towards the painted calligraphic horizon two pathways merge and diverge as the praxis develops. These pathways may be characterized as pictorial and personal experimental. The former is characterized by key intersections with artists and the latter by learning experiences which mark the journey's trajectory. Chapter Three, Four and Five chart pivotal influences pathways and Chapter Six the experimental route.

2.5.1 The realisation of the calligraphic vision

For the present researcher, Peter Paul Rubens (1577 - 1640), Rembrandt, Van Rijin (1606 - 69), Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723 - 92), Paul Cézanne (1839 - 1906), Pablo Picasso (1881 - 1973), Giorgio Morandi (1890 - 1964) and Lucien Freud (1922 -) represent some of the most personally influential painters of the last five hundred years. For other artists one could be sure that there might be a myriad of different choices but, for me, these painters' images have tended to resonate from subsequent visual sightings of their images and have thus exhibited a powerful influence upon

my praxis, especially Cézanne, Picasso and Reynolds in the early stages of my painting career.

It is argued that these artists' own keen sense of individuality communicates and teaches those who follow not to copy but to develop and trust their own painterly instincts. Table 2.5.1 takes a broad analytic brush to the work of these key artists in an attempt to identify that which is idiosyncratic about each. It covers an extensive time span because, since public taste changes from century to century, such a time span is necessary to give a reasonably informed picture as to how individual vision has revealed itself through differing epochs, with the subsequent political and cultural changes that impacted upon artists in their time. No doubt the culture of the society in some ways affected the artists' images but these painters tended to avoid societal pressures when painting which is what makes them so interesting to research

In Table 2.5.1 asterisks are used to indicate the strength of presence of particular attributes relevant to the shaping of an individual approach. Hence a single asterisk indicates limited presence while five asterisks signify strong presence.

Table 2.5.1

Application of Key Aesthetic Criteria

Artist	Independence of Image making	Capturing public attention/acceptance that the mould has been broken	Transcendence of time and space	Constant experimentation with oil traces	Evidence of trajectory in strength and precision of visual statement	Work emanates immediacy of vision sensation	TOTAL
Peter Paul Rubens 1577 -1640	*****	*****	*****	****	*****	***	31
Rembrandt Van Rijn 1606-1669	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****	****	34
Sir Joshua Reynolds 1723-92	**	*	**	*	***	*	11
Paul Cézanne 1839 -1906	*****	*****	*****	****	*****	*****	34
Giorgio Morandi 1890 -1964	*****	*****	**	****	*****	*****	29
Pablo Picasso 1881 -1973	*****	*****	**	*****	***	**	27
Lucien Freud 1922 –	*****	**	**	*****	****	*****	26

As acknowledged, these artists were primarily chosen for their individuality in the use of vision (memory) in painting. Individual memory (vision) in painting may be characterized as the painter's own personal aesthetic in image making. Such independent image making involves breaking out of the traditional moulds of what societal taste dictates within a certain epoch of painting and brings that vision (memory) in picture making to the fore of the public's attention. It also means recognizing that the world is different and should be accepted as part of the normal process of what can be seen as an image in painting, as evidenced in the French Salon exhibitions of the 1870s and something akin to the Degenerate art exhibitions in Germany of the 1930s.

Table 2.5.1 clarifies the relevance of each artist to the research. For example Rubens was one of the first and most innovative painters in history. He set standards in figuration that still are a benchmark today but what is so important about his painting was the way his oil traces had not only to be invented but were calligraphic in the sense that they described the contortion of flesh within his many biblical narrative paintings.

Rembrandt's oil traces are a voyage of discovery for any artist and are as modern now and loaded with sensation from what he had seen as the day he painted them. This is especially the case in Rembrandt's self portrait series because of the forensic

nature of his calligraphic paint traces which became so succinct through a life time in using himself as the motif.

Cézanne was an innovator in painting and highly influential as an artist in relation to the form and optics. He was pivotal in creating a myriad of new paintings, making discoveries not, only for himself but for many others who followed. Cézanne also set out a painting system which was almost scientific in enabling him to become fluent in putting thought into action and recording as it painted traces onto canvas. In this process he achieved a highly idiosyncratic calligraphic vision.

Similarly the very individual still life monastic like paintings of Morandi are ideal for the research as they reveal a singular and passionate response to the public surface of a limited but infinitely varied motif. Freud too has produced his system of painting his unique vision of the human figure, in particular his rendering of the infinite varieties of human flesh. It was a passionate and lifelong pursuit that has now produced a distinctive style of painting with a sustained inventiveness of paint traces. As Freud progressed through his painterly life, his ability to describe in paint the flesh and external appearances of his human motifs became an idiosyncratic visual odyssey.

The antithesis of the idiosyncratic painter is Sir Joshua Reynolds who, ironically, stands against Rubens, Rembrandt, Morandi, Cézanne, Picasso and Freud. Independent vision (memory) in painting is extraordinarily hard to do and these aforementioned artists did it exceptionally well. It is puzzling that, in the case of Reynolds whose praxis was contracted so securely around a dogma (the dictates of form, perspective and tone painted in an academic style representative of the classical masters of painting) effectively stifled further investigation for himself or those under his tutelage. As much as he could paint well, Reynolds was almost the exact opposite of Rubens and Rembrandt for, if they pushed the calligraphic horizon in painting outwards, he kept it where it was, therefore never surpassing what he had learned of the masters from his travels to Italy and that position he held as a measure for good painting.

This was not the case for the others and it is for this reason that they have been chosen as models. Nevertheless it is recognized that Reynolds could handle paint in an extraordinarily interesting way. For instance, in the New South Wales Art Gallery there is a painting by Reynolds titled *James, 7th Earl of Lauderdale;* on the right leg above the knee are oil traces representing pants in greys/silver tones and painted with a dexterity that is truly inspiring. It may be the case that he was contractual in his thinking but he was nevertheless a very competent painter in his own right.

The most important consideration is how these artists' objective calligraphic visions were revealed through time and space, it being crucial to study this painterly trait in order to gain an understanding of how artists have travelled within their artistic life, constantly experimenting with oil traces and how they can be placed as succinctly as possible from vision (memory) till the final painting. The aforementioned artists left an *oeuvre* that has the potential to yield the vital evidence that the idiosyncratic calligraphic vision in painting was a constant pressure, not in a negative sense but as a memory (vision) driven issue of how the painter could possibly make this mark better, thus creating a stronger and more precise visual statement in paint.

In the following chapters these aforementioned painters and their painterly *oeuvre* will be discussed in greater detail to reveal how their calligraphic vision developed and the extent to which it was achieved. Table 2.5.2 maps this artist's stages of development and the key influences in each period together with relevant chapter references.

Table 2.5.2

Pivotal Artistic Influences at each Career Stage

Career Development	Artists of Pivotal Influences	Chapter
Early Artistic development 1982 -1995	Paul Cézanne (1839 – 1906)	3.2
	Pablo Picasso (1881 – 1973)	3.3
	Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723 – 92)	3.4
Mid career Realizations of the Calligraphic Vision 1996 -2006	Peter Paul Rubens (1577 -1640)	4.2
	Rembrandt Van Rijn (1606 – 69)	4.3
Career Maturity 2007 -	Giorgi Morandi (1890 – 1964)	5.2
	Lucian Freud (1922 -)	5.3

Chapter 3 Pivotal Influences (Early Career)

3.1 Early career Influences

Paradoxically early career influences spanned artists from three centuries and were characterized by both push and pull factions in the case of Joshua Reynolds.

3.2 Paul Cézanne 1839 - 1906

3.2.1 Independence of image making

An early and significant influence upon my artistic career was Paul Cézanne. Especially intriguing was how his paint traces were seemingly so immediate from remembrances of vision from what has become known as his *sensations*. These sensations within his paintings were influential more specifically because the idiosyncratic nature of his appreciation of complex layers upon the chosen motifs (from what he had sighted) was very intriguing. The visual recognition of his own matrix as observable in the referential bluish paint marks denoting the edges of objects was also of special interest.

In his painting *Still life with Commode* (Plate 3.2.1) there is the evidence of Cézanne's idiosyncratic painting style.

Plate 3.2.1 *Still Life with Commode* 1883 - 87, oil on canvas, 73.3 x 92.2 cm by Paul Cézanne, Bayerische Staatsgemaldesammlungen, Munich http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/cezanne/sl/water-jug.jpg internet accessed 30 -1- 2008

For instance, in the small whitish vase on the left hand side of the painting, the bottom ellipse of the object is seemingly out of sync in terms of what is considered technically correct, but vision is individual and Cézanne may well have sighted the pot this way. Within the painting, there is a green and yellow ceramic behind the small whitish vase which also has an ellipse that one might not consider technically correct painting; inclusive with this is the bowl of fruit and this seems to be an ongoing idiosyncratic painting trait that lasted a lifetime.

In addition, within the painting *Still life with Commode,* there is evidence in the fruit of the beginnings of his painted sensation that became a lifelong passion for understanding how colour rendered the underlying structure of nature as light progressively revealed the form of objects he painted. For example, the fruit in the bowl contain the raw oil traces of Cézanne's observations in colours ranging from yellows, ochre yellows, red sienna browns to raw umber sienna hues on the underside of the fruit, where less light penetrates the object.

Hence these early idiosyncratic oil traces contain evidence of a painter about to go on an individual journey towards his calligraphic horizon and, as unsophisticated as they are in *Still life with Commode,* there is the later evidence that Cézanne swathed a path in painting that had not been forged before in oils in painting history so far. In Plate 3.2.2 there is the example of the idiosyncratic painting journey by Cézanne taking place and, as he had said so many times on this trek, "he was unable to realize"

http://www.fullbooks.com/Since-Cezanne1.html internet accessed 25 - 9 - 2007).

This was the enormous difficulty of that journey not only for Cézanne but for all others who venture away from the safe paradigm of painting.

Plate 3.2.2 *Still Life with Water Jug c.* 1892 – 3; oil on canvas, 53 x 71.1 cm by Paul Cézanne, Tate Collection London. http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=2116 internet accessed 5 - 8 - 2008

3.2.2 Breaking with traditional moulds

Developing a new or idiosyncratic way in painting does not mean stopping with its invention as, essentially, it is experimented on constantly. Cézanne was a painter whose continuous process of experimentation attempted to discover what his paint traces were revealing to him after visual contact with nature throughout his life as an artist.

The invention of a new painting system such as Cézanne had created, whilst not contracting to what had been discovered so far, was an important realisation. For

instance, in Plate 3.2.2 *Still Life with Water Jug,* there is a series of lines around various objects such a fruit in the bowl, the bowls themselves and the jug, which is about Cézanne realising the arbitrary nature of where objects' edges are actually sighted in relationship to the eye's movement and also recognizing it as a living sensorial object against a static object.

From Clark's (1999) introduction to his book *The Painting of Modern Life*, there is more or less the most succinct analysis of Cézanne's similar preoccupation with the visual nature of where edges exist within the picture plane:

> The more one looks, the more one attends to interruptions and paradoxes in perception, and the more one suspects that the fixity of things is to be found exactly there, at the point where vision gives up the ghost. (The edges of things, to take example, Cézanne mused over in his letters are undoubtedly *there* but in an especially perplexing way. A Painter can fix a final line, but that should somehow enact its own arbitrariness. Out of the manifold edges of an apple or a shoulder the painter makes one edge, visibly a contrivance, visually nonetheless convincing.) (Clark, 1999: 17)

Breaking moulds within painting traditions is essentially about the journey in one's own vision as evidenced in *Life with Still Water Jug* (Plate 3.2.2) painted some five years after *Still Life with Commode*. The leap in Cézanne's calligraphic oil traces is phenomenal. For instance, within the image *Still Life with Water Jug,* there is a far more fluid painting system to be witnessed as observed in the apples and the background surrounding the jug. Within the painted apples, there is the evidence of a range of greens that had essentially been mixed before and placed in accordance with where that hue was seen within the picture plane on various apples.

Cézanne's pre-mixing of colours on the palette allowed him to focus on the hues within the picture plane thus enabling them to be more succinctly placed in accordance with the colour recognitions sighted from the picture plane, then placed onto the canvas. This particular system of painting is why Cézanne produced side by side paint marks in smallish groupings representing an area of sighted hue on the motif within his image making that is evidenced in the way the ochre's oil traces are placed representing the material throughout the canvas in Plate 3.2.2.

No one in painting before had attempted such an undertaking so these actions by Cézanne essentially shattered the traditional moulds of painting, especially rupturing

what was considered accuracy in image, such as perspective and form although, ironically, what did happen achieved a far fuller idea of what form actually did look like.

3.2.3 Evidence of new trajectory

Cézanne's painting not only captured the public's attention towards the end of his life but set precedents for other artistic movements to chart new courses for art in a modern world. For example, Henri Matisse purchased Cézanne's *Three Bathers, c 1879 - 82* which, financially for him and his wife, was an extreme purchase but one Matisse needed make because of what could be gleaned from the image in terms of painterly knowledge. Having such a work in the immediate proximity, that being his house, and being able to examine the oil traces would be something of a rarity nowadays but was necessary for him. The acceptance by Matisse of Cézanne's genius as a painter and the need to purchase his painting is elaborated on by Hilary Spurling (2000) in her book *The Unknown Matisse*:

> His resistance to the painting's strong and sober beauty had failed him as he walked beside Garonne and, mindful of Vollard's lesson about time

and money, he had written to ask Marquet to make an immediate offer on his behalf. The clinching factor in making up his mind was his wife. Amelie knew nothing about Cézanne, but she had understood the affair of the blue butterfly the year before and she was not a Parayre for nothing. The plan was to raise the down payment to Vollard on the *Three Bathers* – 500 francs (or 100 dollars), a sum far beyond the young couple's means – by pawning a magnificent emerald ring which had been a wedding present and was now one of Amilie's prize possessions. She never forgot the pang it cost her when her husband eventually returned to the pawnshop to redeem the ring only to find that his pawn ticket was out-of-date. She loved jewels, and she mourned the loss of this one all her life.

But although it took many years before Cézanne's painting began to speak in its own voice to Amelie, she had caught an echo—or recognised the strength of her husband's response—and she understood in her bones the importance of this kind of sacrifice. Over the next three decades this small canvas would exert a powerful pull over all the Matisses, representing to the parents an act of blind faith in the future, symbolising

> to the children everything they had been bought up to believe in, sustaining the whole family with a mysterious life of its own. (Spurling, 2000:181 - 2))

Hence, in terms of how the public accepted Cézanne's artworks, quantity of audience did not matter. It is the audience's continuing quality and their subsequent inquiry into Cézanne's painting that essentially matters as witnessed in Spurling's (2002) research into the Matisses. It is also the sacrifice that comes with the purchase of innovative painting revealing Matisse's acceptance that Cézanne had painted imagery which ruptured the tedium of techniques that William Bouguereau taught, as one of the main lecturers at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts (and was undoubtedly instrumental in blocking Cézanne's annual applications to the Salon for twenty years).

The problem for Cézanne in gaining public acceptance was that his focus was on teaching himself, and subsequently other painters, about his visual relationship with the external world and in saying that he was really their mentor. Paul Klee (1968) noted in his diaries after coming into contact with Cézanne's painting that

> I… saw eight pictures by Cézanne at the [1909 Munich] Sezession. In my eyes he is a teacher *par excellence*, more of a teacher than Van Gogh. (Klee, 1968: 237)

Klee's is just one of a myriad of testimonies that acknowledged Cézanne as a mentor in relation to the appearances of the external world. It was not a deliberate attempt from the painter of Aix that other artists choose him as their master. More to the point, it was what one might call a focused calligraphic journey undertaken by Cézanne through vision in painting, which gained him the recognition amongst his fellow painters denied him for so long by the Salon.

3.2.4 Transcendence of time and space

The painting *Still Life with Apples 1895-98* (Plate 3.2.3) represents Cézanne more or less at his best in painterly experimentation about his sensations which is why it is worthy of much more detailed exploration.

Plate 3.2.3 *Still Life with Apples*. 1895-98. oil on canvas, 27 x 36 1/2" (68.6 x 92.7 cm). Lillie P. Bliss Collection, Museum of Modern Art http://www.moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?object_id=78486, internet accessed 5 - 8 - 2008

As a painter Cézanne created almost timeless imagery; few painters throughout history have been able to achieve this. It is important to recognise that, for Cézanne, time in the motif was recorded through his painterly analysis in objective observations about the structure of an object. In doing so Cézanne created an image that is noted for its timeless qualities as each image has seemingly acquired a modernity that exists now and is ongoing. For instance, at the Bridgestone Museum in Tokyo, there are three Cézanne paintings, the most interesting being the *Mont Sainte-Victoire and Chateau Noir 1904 - 6;* in these Cézanne uses his calligraphic store room of brush marks to create the sensation of watercolour translucency in oils.

What is even more interesting is the way this experiment in painting has travelled time and space, with sensations still imbued in the oil traces that give the sense of having been painted yesterday. As these oil traces could not have been placed wet on wet, due to the nature of the tints having to dry, the next transparent oil glaze brush mark would have been placed over the top. It is amazing to see these differing sensations of time integrate into a singular memory of a moment in time, something akin to Claude Monet's impressionist attitude in painting but more to do with structure under a singular moment of light around midday.

For example, Monet has revealed here in his painting titled; *Meule, Soeil Coucart 1891* the flatness of the Haystack. The flat sensation is caused by Monet's eyes reception of the sunlight enveloping the Haystack and painting it onto the canvas through natural vision. Therefore he deconstructs the nature of form through this idea of how to paint the motif within the landscape. And it is this moment of memory that has travelled time and space as can be evidenced in our reception of the image (Plate 3.2.4).

Plate 3.2.4 *Meule, Soeil Coucart* 1891, oil on canvas,73.3 cm h x 92.6 cm w, by Claude Monet, Museum of Fine Arts Boston http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Claude_Monet_-_Graystaks_I.JPG, internet accessed, 5 - 8 - 2008

Phenomena in painting can at times only be described and not scientifically understood; no doubt as time progresses to its finite end, many of the phenomena such as seen in Cézanne's painting will be revealed to us, for example his memory. Somewhat more amazing is how our memory now interacts with his sensations as painted then. It is important to recognise that his realization left in oil traces can still affect one's reception with the immediacy it did then. How Cézanne's vision in paint transcends time and space is revealed to the audience, if they are capable of it; they can stare into the translucency of his painted vision almost as if time stood still. It is as though it defies the Heraclitean (approx 500BCE) philosophical logic on time, as Russell elaborates here:

> The doctrine that everything is in a state of flux is the most famous of the opinions of Heraclitus, and the one most emphasized by his disciples, as described in Plato's *Theaetetus*. 'You cannot step twice into the same river; for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you' (Russell, 2005: 52)

In *Mont Sainte-Victoire and Chateau Noir 1904 – 6* one can see the painted objective sensations, However, inasmuch as there is aging in the oil traces, it is minimal in its interference as what can be viewed now is much as Cézanne did and, like him, we have also to deal with the shifting nature of the hue in oils through time. So no doubt Cézanne's painting does transcend time and space with an immediacy like no other.

3.2.5 Constant experimentation with oil traces

Cézanne's *oeuvre* in painting is littered with the graphic evidence of the search for his sensations in painting, and this is matched by the shift in the way the oil traces were painted. Therefore one needs to look at his early painting to realise that his image making was about developing a calligraphic idiosyncratic painted sensation then, as in the later and final works. In this early Cézanne painting titled *The Artist's*

Father (Plate 3.2.5) there is the evidence of his early painterly forays into his sensations through manipulation of the paint traces.

Plate 3.2.5 *The Artist's Father* 1866, oil on canvas, 198.5 cm x 1189.3 cm by Paul Cézanne, National Art Gallery of Washington, D.C. http://www.artunframed.com/images/artmis42/cezanne99.jpg, internet accessed 5 - 8 - 2008

Most notably these early sensations in painting can be witnessed in the chair behind the father's head, where Cézanne is concentrating on getting the luminosity of the light shining on the material in sync with his visual sensation. The oil traces in *The Artists Father c1866* are in keeping with a developing system in oil traces that was acquired to attain an individual praxis in image making.

In the range of oil traces painted by Cézanne behind the father's head, there are several hues of what appears to be titanium white, applied in thick oily swathes brushed downwards, then another several thick swathes of slightly greyed oil traces mixed with a tint of raw sienna, giving a slightly reddish hue to the white of something refracting in the light upon the chair, downwards. As the cushion near the top of the chair slopes backwards, the whitish hues of thick paint are executed more horizontally with a roundish curve to them, which is the underlying structure of the colour of the object. This early analysis of the light sensation on the chair was really Cézanne's lifelong passion in painting; weirdly enough, it was as if he were a photograph through time with an intimate visual scrutiny of its structure. It is interesting to note that, whether Cézanne painted portrait or pear in a still life, he treated it with the same attitude in paint: and that was to find its underlying structure through painting its form.

The next period of Cézanne's painting, which was where he was experimenting with his paint traces, can be seen in his painting *Self Portrait on a Rose Background c.1875 - 77*, (Plate 3.2.6), an image which exhibits a profound shift in the oil traces.

Plate 3.2.6 *Self Portrait on a Rose Background,* 1875 - 77, oil on canvas, 66cm x 55 cm by Paul Cézanne, Collection of Galerie Beyeler, Switzerland http://www.artunframed.com/images/artmis42/cezanne92.jpg internet accessed 23 - 10 - 2005

For example, the paint traces in Plate 3.2.6 demonstrate a dramatic shift within the paint marks in the background in relation to how Cézanne treats the light and colour refracting from that illumination. Evidence of this shift is just behind Cézanne's head on the top left hand side, for it exhibits a range of oil traces slantwise and receding downwards going from right to left in reddish/gold hues in mid tones of possibly five more deliberate strokes; next to that, slightly above, there are almost identical oil

traces applied, albeit slightly darker, as if raw umber has been integrated with the mix of oil paint and, next to where these oil traces end, there are whitish olive green/grey painting marks that are curled, almost as if an invention of oil traces is taking place to articulate a sensation. The paradigm of painting used by Cézanne was being increased as new realisations in image making became encapsulated within his visual synthesis.

The Large Bathers (Plate 3.2.7.) was one of Cézanne's final paintings and it is within this image that most of what he had learnt so far in painting, let us say his calligraphic journey, is exhibited.

Plate 3.2.7 *The Large Bathers* 1900 - 05, 132.4 cm x 219.1cm, by Paul Cézanne, Collection of the Barnes Foundation, USA http://www.artunframed.com/images/artmis42/cezanne82.jpg internet Accessed 28 - 10 - 05

More specifically (Plate 3.2.7), it is his system in painting that he honed throughout his life to reveal his sensations in oil traces that really characterizes his innovation in paint traces. This system in painting that Cézanne had created to articulate his system consisted of a range of colours and his friend Emile Bernard recorded this arrangement as follows in Table 3.2.1.

Table 3.2.1

Emile Bernard's recording of Cézanne's System of Colours

Brilliant yellow	
Naples Yellow	
Yellows	Chrome Yellow
Yellow Ochre	
Raw Sienna	
Veronese greens	
Emerald	
Terre-verte	
Vermillion	
Red ochre	
Reds	Burnt Sienna
Madder lake	
Carmine lake	
Burnt lake	
Cobalt blue	
Blues	Ultramarine
Prussian blue	
Peach Black	

Cézanne at this time is mixing paint with a self developed system of painting, an achievement which allowed him to concentrate on his sensations and articulate them as close to his memory as possible. In Plate 3.2.7 there is the evidence of how efficient his oil traces had become in acquiring the form in a visual sensation of colour, thus revealing that his system of painting was working. For instance, in Plate 3.2.7 on the standing left hand side figure, on the woman's breast and above the women's pelvic bone, there are patches of colour in a range of greens, small but precisely and deliberately painted. Memories within these first marks are up above the breast and starting near the collar-bone; they angle straight down emphasizing the act of gravity on breast, with some reflective hue from the surrounding trees. Next to the vertical oil traces are several more, bent slightly to the right of viridian terre-verte hue oil traces but somewhat more subdued in tone, due to the curvature of the breast and absence of direct light on that particular area of the anatomy.

Next to that is Cézanne's use of French ultramarine, prussian blue oil traces, signifying somewhere that two objects intersect; in this case it is where the breast adjoins the woman's body. Next to the line there is a sequential series of greens containing an amount of greyish prussian blues, thus revealing again the lack of light infiltrating that part of the body.

What becomes interesting about Cézanne's use of oil traces with these hues is that they are applied in the same tone of colour but in differing directions, as he has sensed them from memory. For example, on the right hand side of the painting on the back of the kneeling figure, there is a very similar range of greens, greys and prussian blue tones which suggests what Cézanne had achieved more than most other artists in painting. He was now becoming extremely succinct through a developing system of painting that was so efficient in manifesting his oil traces, and as close to his vision as possible, that it was almost as though he was painting on auto pilot. But this was not the case; Cézanne was very strategic with each conscious decision in applying oil traces to eliminate artifice from his sensations and let them be the sole guide to his image making.

3.2.6 Evidence of trajectory in strength and precision of visual statement

Benesch (2000) quotes Cézanne's lifelong praxis statement that

> I advance…all of my canvas at once, together. In the same movement, the same conviction, I bring relation [sic] everything that is scattered… I take these colours, tones, shades from the right, the left, here there everywhere;

> I bring them together... They make lines. They become objects, rocks, trees, without me thinking about it. They take on volume. They have value. (Benesch 2000:41)

He never diverged from this statement. Throughout his life in painting he remained true to his own sensations resonating within his memory; it was immaterial whether he stood in front of the motif to paint or was painting large scale images within his studio.

In the Plate 3.2.6 self portrait by Cézanne, there is sufficient evidence that the system he was developing coalesced some of the results referred to in his statement above. For instance, around the head of Cézanne there are four large patches of a peach rose hue, almost identical in colour and application, which are echoed in two smaller areas of the same colour on the left lower ear lobe and high on the cheek bone, where the light and dark hues interplay and, although this is somewhat rough in relationship to his later painting, his statement regarding his art stands true. For the patches of hue in differing ranges of contrasts do connect visually, as forms that were seen from the public surfaces, being the background and his own face.

In the later work *Mont Sainte - Victoire 1902* (Plate 3.2.8) painted some twenty five years later, there is ample evidence of his praxis statement holding true again with his calligraphic vision being far more sophisticated from the storehouse of memory he had acquired through a lifetime of praxis.

Plate 3.2.8 *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, 1902 - 6, oil on canvas, 57.2 x 97.2 cm, by Paul Cézanne, Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York http://www.metmuseum.org/Works_of_Art/viewOnezoom.asp?dep=11&zoomFlag=0&viewmode=1&item=1994%2E420 internet accessed 5 - 8 - 2008

In the sky of *Mont Sainte – Victoire 1902* there is a range of hues that Cézanne has painted, in various sizes of colour and contrasts, on to the canvas, representing various sensations that he had experienced in relation to motif. These painted sensate memories can be seen in the sky, the mountain and the foreground with the hues

ranging from mid cobalt French ultramarine blues, mixed with grey, opaque French ultramarine blue grey, light cobalt purple and deep bluish grey. These bluish hues represent differing elements of the landscape for, in the foreground, the blue hues tend to reveal the colours of shadows as evidenced in the mountains that are not facing the direct light source; in the sky they seem to represent the hues of clouds as he witnessed them and painted them later in the studio.

There are many other hues evidenced in the painting which reveal the way he sought out similar hues within his picture plane. His later paintings give an intriguing insight into a painter, solely interested in experimenting as much as possible through a singular theory. In investigating this theory about volume and values sought in colour, he created a unique system of painting which allowed the oily colours he had pre-mixed onto his palette to be juxtaposed with his theoretical concerns. Consequently this has left an incredible legacy in calligraphic vision in painting not yet matched to this day.

3.2.7 Work emanates immediacy of vision sensation

Cézanne was a painter who relied almost totally on sensations received from standing in front of the motif. Whether he painted people, still life or landscape did not matter because he was dedicated to learning from the direct visual engagement in seeing how form from the hue on the public surfaces of nature or secondary nature could become manifest in paint.

It can also be noted that Cézanne spent much of his time painting still life. This was not economically driven painting at all for he had an allowance given to him by his father, so he was free from financial worries. For Cézanne, painting still life (whether that be skulls, flowers, ceramics or any other kind of still life) allowed him to have a specific motif that was consistently on hand for experimentation in painting. This was seemingly crucial for Cézanne as his sensations needed stability in motif, something that was not affected by weather or human temperament or any phenomena which may potentially have cut short or negatively impacted on his visual engagement with the subject matter.

Painting one's optical sensations as Cézanne did, is always going to have its drawbacks in terms of the duration of life itself, with the subsequent decay that comes eventually to any chosen motif. Science does not educate that anything can have a counterpoint and permanent presence, so clearly Cézanne chose to paint motifs that had reasonably durable qualities. It is no surprise that he chose the *Mont Saint-Victoire,* a mountain, for like the skulls he painted, it was hardly going to disappear quickly unless an asteroid hit the planet which might put an end to much existent life.

Hence Cézanne's choice of subject matter revealed that he was very much about keeping the motif as stable as possible in order to allow experimentation with his sensations. On the 12th of May in 1904, Cézanne wrote to Emile Bernard about the transient light of nature saying: "I proceed very slowly. Nature presents itself to me in great complexity and there is always great progress to be made" (Bernard, 1910: 28). If anything, Cézanne's letter to his friend Bernard reveals how strategic he was in getting the right conditions for his sensations in painting in order to record the motif with the narrowest margin of influence. Cézanne also understood the transient nature of light but, because his interest was not primarily about time and light on the public surfaces, it only became an annoyance to him. It is interesting to note that both

Cézanne and Monet complained bitterly about the phenomenon of transient light. Cézanne sought to ignore it and adapt a concept of the structure of the motif to thus eliminate it, whilst Monet acquired more canvasses to focus on those profound moments of change within it.

3.3 Pablo Picasso 1881 - 1973

During his early years Picasso strove to emulate the master artworks that were on show at le Louvre in Paris; an example of this early painterly tendency can be seen in Plate 3.3.1.

Plate 3.3.1 *Flower,* 1901, oil on canvas, 65.1 cm x 48.9 cm by Pablo Picasso, Tate Gallery, London http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=11854&searchid=7423&tabview=image internet accessed 22-9-2005

Picasso was encouraged by his parents during his childhood and early formative teenage years in Spain to become an artist. To this day, not many parents would go as far as to encourage their children to take on a career as a painter. So it is somewhat rare that his parents were so accommodating and encouraging in relation of his chosen career path. Parental support was soon to pay off for, in September 1895, Picasso was to enter the prestigious School of Fine Arts in Barcelona, where his ability as a young artist was inchoately recognized by his peers, as his lifelong friend Mauel Pallares points out:

> [Picasso] was way ahead of the other students, who were all five or six years older than he. His skill, the speed of his hand, astounded us; he grasped everything so quickly; yet he seemed to take no interest in or pay any attention to what the professors were saying... He was quite aware of his superiority, but he never let it show... At fifteen he had neither the character nor the behaviour of his age. He was very mature. (Cabanne, 1975: 58)

3.3.1 Independence of image making

As much as Picasso was a diligent student at such a young age, it does not mean the seeds of independence against the approved drawing methodologies in the Spanish art schools were not to be another force during his lifetime as an artist. For Picasso, it was the style of rendering an image that was to be incorporated into many others throughout his *oeuvre* as a painter.

Research by Picasso into styles of art generated his idea in painting; there was nothing untoward in this as far as he was concerned for, to borrow from this particular artist or that one, was just meant to happen, which is influence. It was Picasso's independence of image making with this particular idiosyncratic trait of emulating other artist's styles of which he was extraordinarily aware, as was Henri Matisse, who stated as such in a penned letter to Pierre Matisse in March 1946 as cited by Russell (1999):

> Three or four days ago, Picasso came to see me with a very pretty young woman. He could not have been more friendly, and he said he would come back and have a lot of things to tell me. He hasn't come back. He saw what

he wanted to see – my works in cut paper, my new paintings, the painted door, etc. That's all he wanted. *He will put it all to good use in time.* (Russell 1999: 246)

Picasso created new ground by generating an image from another person's style in the sense described by André Lhote 1932 in an insightful review of Picasso's work in the 'Chronique des Arts, Exhibition Picasso, Exhibition Matisse', Nouvelle Revue Francaise, 1 August, 1932 here, "painting after painting" instead of "painting after nature" and "was an extraordinarily new enterprise". Of course it was always going to be new imagery if the temperament of the painter was going to be faithful to self and, as Picasso contained the trait of copying the ideas of others within his own synthesis of painting, it is seemingly unwise to suggest it was merely a copy but instead, as wisely described by Lhote (1932), a new kind of imagery based on painting another's style.

3.3.2 Breaking with traditional moulds

Paris before 1914 and the First World War was an exciting place to be as a painter. It was almost seen to be the centre of the universe as it offered some of the world's best

fine art galleries and already the initial history of modern painting was being exhibited.

For instance, there was Paul Cézanne's first major retrospective in 1907, not long after he had passed away, an exhibition which had a profound effect on Picasso. Moreover it was Cézanne's painting of *The Large Bathers* that moved Picasso into Cubism through the realisation of what his vision had seen in these particular paintings as Zafran (1978) points out in the catalogue *America & European, A Century of Modern Masters, from the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection*:

> They were nudes like no one had ever seen or imagined before. This was because Cézannes-que element was combined with the previously mentioned influence of primitive art. (Zafran, 1978: 15)

Certainly one of the most historical painterly reactions to Cézanne's *The Large Bathers* was that of Picasso. Inspired by Cézanne's great series of bathers, Picasso apparently decided to attempt a monumental composition of a scene of naked women and clothed men in a brothel, *Les Demoiselles of Avignon* (Museum of Modern Art). This plan was apparently abandoned by Picasso (there is some speculation over

exactly what happened with the painting between Picasso's dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler and art historian) but *The Large Bathers* ultimately became a study of five powerful nudes in respect to the distortion of the human figuration with the African masks. Plate 3.3.2 demonstrates Picasso's attempt from the memory of seeing Cézanne's *The Large Bathers*.

Plate 3.3.2 *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon.* 1907, oil on canvas, 243.9 cm x 233.7cm by Pablo Picasso, Collection MOMA USA http://www.moma.org/collection/conservation/demoiselles/index.html internet accessed 17 - 5 - 2006

From being inspired by Cézanne's *Bathers,* Picasso's series of images with his subsequent attempt to be mimetic then produced an image which was different from most images hitherto encountered in western art.

The initial memory of sighting Cézanne's *Bathers* by Picasso can be traced in the composition with the figuration of the human forms and the triangulation of lines and colours that surround the African masks, like the female figure in the right hand top corner of *Les Demoiselles of Avignon.* It seems logical that the influence of delay in memory allowed Picasso's interest in African masks to influence the painting. Picasso's African influence seems to have come from a visit to the *Musée del'Homme* (as it is now known) when, in March 1907 in the original exhibition Hall of the Musée de'Ethnographic, there was a showing of African and Oceanic art which opened up his memory of traces that could be used within his image making,

Upon initial viewings of *Les Demoiselles of Avignon* (which was not actually shown in public for sometime but just to a few of Picasso's friends within his studio), the shock was instantaneous. There is no doubt that he had certainly he had broken the traditions in painting as Elizabeth Cowling (2002) observes:

> Of the first spectators in Bateau Lavior, Matisse and Derain, at least, must have understood the allusion because they were already collecting *art nègre* and were responsible for Picasso's initiation. Matisse's anger at what he saw as an attempt to mock the *modern movement* may have been

> aroused by the blatant way in which Picasso pastiched tribal masks, the latest enthusiasm, with the Parisian *avant-garde*. (Cowling, 2002:149)

So, if Matisse was somewhat angered by the vision of *Les Demoiselles of Avignon* upon first visual contact, then there is seemingly no doubt that Picasso was breaking the traditional moulds of what art could be exhibited as a image from the response of his peers in painting.

3.3.3 Evidence of new trajectory

This particular period of painting marks a period of substantial innovation in image making by Picasso through the use of ready-made objects such as a newspaper as evidenced in Plate 3.3.3.

Plate 3.3.3 *Bottle of Vieux Marc, Glass, Guitar and Newspaper,* 1913, Collage and pen and ink on blue paper support: 467 x 625 mm on paper, unique, by Pablo Picasso, Tate Gallery London http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=11865&searchid=7423 internet accessed 22 - 9 - 2005

Life and art never stand still; somewhat like vision, there is omnipresent activity even when the eyelids are shut. For the most part the public are oblivious to what actually happens around them, even though they have interconnectedness with the world twenty four/seven through general living, conversation, reading and mass media.

Occasionally, within the art world, the public does take notice of an artwork that is genuinely interesting and, more often than not, when something is unfamiliar or confronting, as with some of Picasso's paintings. Yet it only happens when it ceases

to become a threat and is more or less legitimised through official or semi official channels such as entering the collection of state art galleries. Picasso elaborates here on his debt from his learning curve as a painter to Cézanne as Brassai (1967) records:

> Although in his early career, Picasso relied heavily on Cézanne to legitimize his own work: As if I didn't know Cézanne! He was my one and only master! Don't you think I looked at his pictures! I spent years studying them…Cézanne! It was the same with all of us - he was our father. It was he who protected us… (Brassaï, 1967: 90)

This development towards new imagery by an artist is initiated more or less in the studio, then gravitates outwards through contact by fellow artists and then more than likely through art dealers, the audiences that visit art galleries, to then encompass critics and other influential people who view the artworks.

It is then, either through good promotion or publication of visual accounts that have been published in art journals or newspaper columns, that the viewing public read and then tentatively begin to view the paintings themselves, thus forming their own opinions. Generally there is sufficient public debate about a new genre of artwork,

either through the media or from art authorities, to signal that some kind of new visual phenomenon is upon us in the fine art world.

In the case of Picasso's painting *Les Demoiselles of Avignon* this surely happened for the mould of how an artwork could be experienced had to be shifted again outward towards the unendingly fertile paradigm of tolerance that can make the societal memory expand in relationship to how imagery can be experienced.

3.3.4 Transcendence of time and space

If Picasso knew anything about painting, it came from the fact that he used other artists' ideas in image making, without any hint of shame or guilt, without fear or favour - and nor should there have been. As indicated, one of those artists to whom he looked for guidance as a painter was Cézanne. Picasso's choice of Cézanne as a mentor is interesting because, as an artist, he was about time and space in a particular but limited way. Cowling (2002) notes that, in conversation with Christian Zervos, Picasso revealed one particular influence Cézanne's painting had on him:

> It's not what the artist does that counts, but what he is. Cézanne would never have interested me a bit if he had lived like Jacques-Blanche, even if the apple he painted had been ten times more beautiful. What forces our attention is Cézanne's anxiety – that's Cézanne's lesson. (Cowling, 2004: 197)

Jacques-Blanche was akin to the John Sargent portrait painter of his day so Picasso is saying that, if Cézanne were like him, more or less a competent mannerist painter of people, without the sort of highly charged drama of his brushstrokes searching out the colour of structure within his sitters, a practice that tended to leave brush marks that were edgy and nervous with a uncertainty about them, then he would not have been interested in him as a painter. Cézanne's landscape paintings do not deal in the way light acts across the picture plane through time but they tend more or less to focus on the midday light, and this served his purpose in painting the structure of the objects within the motif.

Picasso, on the other hand, had no similar interest in such concepts of time; his aim was merely strategic self gain in terms of what Cézanne's style could help to him to achieve within his pictorial image making. It is this strategic self gain of taking from

one artist or another's realisations in painting, then using it for his own image making, that has travelled time and space thus allowing quicker access to uncharted painterly terrain which is what realisation is about in painting.

Hence Picasso's work became like the masters he was looking at in a way, for he understood they had stood the test of time, with the modernity of oil traces placed upon the canvas no matter what the epoch in which they were painted. It was this modernity and its time travel quality which Picasso so admired and this is why he copied so many ideas from other artists' work, either living or dead. Elizabeth Cowling (2004) points this out in her book Picasso Style and Meaning:

> Junyer Vidal also makes a point of the positive benefits of Picasso's absorption in the art of the past – and warns that the spectator must be visually literate:
>
> It is my view that in order to evaluate Picasso it is necessary to have a deep understanding of all those artists whose work is transcendental and bears the mark of moral grandeur in the development of the human spirit.

> With this last observation he hoped both to justify Picasso's controversial 'borrowings' and to answer critics, like Fagus, who saw them merely as immaturity and thoughtless eclectism. (Cowling, 2004: 111)

Picasso himself acknowledges that being a borrower of styles was a far more insightful and useful tactic within his praxis than most audiences seem to understand for it enabled him to chase a kind of artistic immortality in paint - and this he achieved. Picasso's paintings now sit in the major galleries, with the masters he copied and, like many of them, the paint marks on the canvas now bring a kind of moment in brushed oil trace from then to now. Picasso himself verifies this idea here, whilst his paintings were being hung alongside the great masters of the Louvre whom, for many years, he had admired and from whom he had gleaned knowledge:

> 'For me, there is no past or future in art,' Picasso stipulated. 'If a work of art can't live in the present, it's futile to wait for it.'

http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23765724-5017140,00.html

3.3.5 Constant experimentation with oil traces

Plate 3.3.4 represents Picasso in his mature period as a painter and probably at the height of his fame.

Plate 3.3.4 *Nude Woman with Necklace* 1968
oil on canvas, b1135 mm x 1617 mm by Pablo Picasso, Tate Gallery, London, http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=11870&searchid=7423 internet accessed 30 - 1 - 2008

Picasso never settled on one style or another; whether he was at the Louvre, with fellow artists or wherever else, he sought to retrieve information for his paintings as a constant source of new knowledge. But it was focussed not on what Picasso could glean from the historical situation of imagery (like an historian to share with others) but more from the monist position of a painter. That was Picasso's common standpoint before each visual campaign in scrutinizing paintings he admired and really wanted to see: He scrutinized what made the paint marks maintain a lasting

modernity as much as any manmade object could maintain those properties? Sooner or later of course, paintings will decay; that is a fact in science as nothing is forever, not even earth.

This desire to see a kind of painterly immortality reflected within Picasso's painted imagery made him change styles constantly and, in doing so, lead to a kind of belief that his actions in painting were dramatic (shifting the visual experiences of paint traces). Picasso acknowledged that

> It's the movement of painting that interests me, the dramatic movement from one effort to the next, even if those efforts are perhaps not pushed to their ultimate end... I've reached a moment, you see when the movement of my thought and interests me more than the thought itself. (Gilot, 1966: 121)

Picasso was not subversive as a painter; he of all people wanted to be the omnipresent centre of art of his and all time. In seeking an egocentric position within his own painting, Picasso sought new ways of making paint traces, like a marketable brand label of the latest automobile.

And there is little doubt that Picasso achieved in a sense, what he desired in life - a kind of brand label immortality, as the word *Picasso* in the world is synonymous with art, even if many of his images are not.

3.3.6 Evidence of trajectory in strength and precision of visual statement

Picasso was a painter who needed constant feeding on visual stimuli to access his creativity in painting. He never stood still in terms of style for very long; his life as an artist was something akin to the sun moving across the sky, always shifting the hue and tones of what can be seen on earth. Gilot (1966) notes that he acknowledges himself:

> What people forget is that everything is unique. Nature never produces the same thing twice … That's why I stress the dissimilarity, for example, between the left eye and the right eye. The painter shouldn't make them so similar. They're just not that way. (Gilot, 1966: 52)

Firstly, nature actually does not produce the same thing twice; earthquakes are one exception in that one knows they can strike in the same place twice, maybe lightning too but, because one has not heard of an instance, does not mean it has not happened. As a general rule, however, at the moment, unless science interferes (as in the case of cloning), Picasso would seem to be in the right. More importantly, Picasso's understanding of vision and how memory records sight is significant because we do see things differently through each eye, thus making whatever one is painting somewhat unequal in terms of the formal traditions of form, perspective and tone, as well as the influence of one's own idiosyncratic vision.

Plate 3.3.5 reveals the beginning of Picasso's influence from styles of painting.

Plate 3.3.5 *Girl in Chemise*, circa 1905, oil on canvas 727 mm x 600 cm, by Pablo Picasso, Tate Gallery, London http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=11856&searchid=8369 internet accessed 14 - 7 - 2006

If shifting styles in painting reflects Picasso's main idea in art, it started at an early age for, in *Girl in Chemise* (Plate 3.3.5), the influence of the French painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780 - 1867) who had a major exhibition in 1905 at the *Salon d'Automne* can be discerned. It is interesting to note that, in this exhibition, Ingres impressed a majority of Parisian painters. By temperament Picasso had to try to capture a central artistic space and, in doing so, undertook to study what Ingres had used as inspiration for inclusion in his own idiosyncratic attitude in paint. Cowling (2002) reflects thus on Picasso:

> Like so many other artists, Picasso had been profoundly impressed by the Ingres exhibition at the 1905 Salon d'Automne and, with his mind filled with memories of the antiquities in the Louvre, he was acutely sensitive to the 'primitive' and 'archaic' echoes in Ingres's personal interpretation of Classical sculpture. It came easily to him to see Ingres in terms of Egyptian art, Egyption art in terms of Ingres, and in absorbing and blending the elements from both he enrolled himself with the newly defined tradition of primitivism classicism. (Cowling, 2004: 139)

So at an early age Picasso already had a deep understanding of the antiquities of art and painting that were on hand in Le Louvre, and made the connection Ingres had used from many of the ancient ideas in more modern constructions of image making. This no doubt was enormously liberating for Picasso in the future; it was somehow like go and paint, you now know what to do. In mid career Picasso was even more rampant in his collection of styles to be turned into something else within his painting Hence, as Picasso had no shame in taking from other people's styles in art, then he stands true to his praxis.

3.3.7 Work emanates immediacy of vision sensation

Picasso differed from Paul Cézanne in relationship to his desire to paint the sensations of coloured light, as seen upon the public surfaces of objects either in the landscape or still life but nevertheless Cézanne remained his primary mentor.

For Picasso, the immediacy of vision was not his main interest; essentially it was style and what he could learn from other painters' ideas on the canvas. To understand an idea and translate it into painting, whether it be Picasso's own or somebody else's, did not matter. He was always open to curiosity as a painter; it was an almost

pathological condition he employed in his system of painting. Picasso's phenomenon as a painter is complex so it is not easy to identify a single aspect or even several as his statements on art throughout his life morphed. The closest one might get to a deeper understanding of Picasso and his system of painting is this; in relationship to being asked by a friend as to why he surrendered much of his valuable painting time to visitors, he is quoted (Gilot, 1966) as having replied thus:

> 'If I tell Sabartés I'm not available, and people come and I know they're there and I don't let them in, then I'm tormented by the idea that there's something I ought to know and don't, and I can't concentrate on my work. Braque's a lucky devil. He a solitary, meditative type who lives completely within himself, I need others, not simply because they bring something but because I have this damnable curiosity that has to be satisfied by them'. (Gilot, 1966: 66 - 7)

So, for Picasso, painting a landscape, still life, portrait or nude, was rarely about the immediacy of sensation. It was more about the idea from another source and how he could alter it into something that was more in line with what he wanted to create. He

was essentially about shifting the calligraphic vision in painting to new territories in which the resultant image could be experienced by himself and the audience.

3.4 Sir Joshua Reynolds 1723 - 92

Plate 3.4.1 reveals the beginning of a style of painting that Reynolds built very little upon in terms of his own art theories or any addition to the long tradition of innovation in painting from what had studied in sighting the masters, although he did achieve certain painterly techniques at a high level.

Plate 3.4.1 *Self Portrait* 1747 – 8, oil on canvas 635 mm x 743 mm by Joshua Reynolds, National Portrait Gallery of London http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/reynolds/roomguide1.shtm internet accessed 23 - 8 - 2005

In Plate 3.4.1 Reynolds portrays himself as a young painter seeking assurance that he can paint to a required standard. There is nothing essentially radical about his pose; it is a fairly typical self portrait and, in some ways, may indicate a certain safety in image making which he never veered away from throughout his *oeuvre* as a painter.

3.4.1 Independence of image making

From the cradle of his career as an artist to his grave, Reynolds was a talented painter whose practice was not directed towards painting the idiosyncratic calligraphic vision, although he was good at learning from the innovations of other great painters.

The irony of Reynolds is that he could paint well in a certain contractual mannerism. There are enough of his portrait works to suggest that, even at an early age, he had achieved a high level of competency as evidenced in Plate 3.4.1. But there is also enough anecdotal evidence to suggest that these early gifts as a painter stayed more or less static in his image making throughout his whole *oeuvre* which is rather surprising considering the considerable influence he had upon painters during his life time and afterwards.. For instance, critics like E.H. Grombrich (1909 - 2001) wrote articles in the Burlington Magazine titled "Reynolds Theory and Practice of Imitation

in 1942" and, more current to his time William Blake wrote on a copy of Reynolds's Discourse "A lie! a lie! a lie!"(Stanley, 1924: 179 - 202). The famous English painter John Constable (1776 - 1837) was deeply moved by Reynolds's death and had such respect for him as a painter that he painted *Cenotaph to Reynolds's Memory.* This act by Constable is surprising since he was an innovator in paint compared with the more contracted stance which characterized Reynolds.

Reynolds's image making progressed but within the ambit of his dependence on arts historical masters to guide him through the canvas, much like a jet passenger plane's autopilot guides the pilot upon a course at night from one airport to another, with little deviation other than the alerts and warnings that stem from external forces such as the idiosyncratic nature of the weather within the aircraft's immediate vicinity.

This autopilot praxis trait within Reynolds's art can be observed in this drawing of himself in 1784 (Plate 3.4.2) that more or less reveals little shift in the methodologies of transcribing vision of himself from the earlier self portrait as in Plate 3.5.1.

Plate 3.4.2 *Self portrait as a figure of horror* 1784, Chalk on paper, frame: 629 x 470 x 32 mm, support: 368 x 251 mm on paper, unique, Bequeathed by Henry Vaughan 1900 http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=12403&searchid=8378&tabview=image internet accessed 30 - 5 - 2006

Indeed it contains all the traditions of mannered portrait painting. For example the shadow across the face from the right hand exhibits the techniques the old masters invented, that being light is separated through the graduation of hue according to one moment of perception, and the clothes have the technical invention of form thus giving perceptual volume to the figure. There is nothing in the image to suggest his own idiosyncratic synthesis in painting.

This might suggest that that Reynolds was not particularly interested in researching his own personal synthesis in painting from his visual experience of the external world or, alternatively, that he was satisfied with his position in the tradition.

3.4.2 Breaking with traditional moulds

As a talented image maker in oils, Reynolds could not actually create the same independence in his chosen motif as other painters who created their own systems of painting. He was akin to a W.E. Johns, author of the *Biggles Books,* with a paint brush. He enjoyed painting exotic contemporary heroes from the British Empire, such as Captain the Hon. John Hamilton c.1746 and Augustus 1st Viscount Keppel c 1752 - 53 amongst many others. His world in art reflected the aristocratic society of the time; hence his work became enmeshed in their contractual taste.

So, for Reynolds, there was never going to be any breaking with traditions of societal taste. He was indeed, the societal arbiter in image making of the time as he was also appointed the first president of the Royal Academy of Art in 1768. He had unprecedented power bestowed upon him, so anything he created was seen to be in the finest aesthetic taste in Great Britain.

Unfortunately, for many of the students within the Royal Academy, graduation was more or less as a Reynolds clone, thus reinforcing the traditions of painting, instead of facilitating experimentation forwards and breaking the moulds with innovative

painting systems. This adherence to Reynolds's doctrine in painting was often rewarded with commissions and introductions so the artist could make a living but it had little to do with traversing new ground in painting. Consequently Reynolds and his followers remained faithful to the traditions of painting and stayed safely within the confines of what was considered good societal taste, thus reaping the rewards for artistic obedience via a good life.

3.4.3 Evidence of new trajectory

Reynolds's choices of subject matter performed in the mannerist traditions of painting were mainly of wealthy or famous sitters from his time, thus unwittingly or deliberately locking his image making into that of a celebrity painter. Reynolds's decision to spend his painterly life as an artist around the British establishment of gentry, aristocracy and society ladies, that mostly included the privileged mundane, does not transcend any time or space. Unlike Rembrandt, people knew what to expect from Reynolds the painter.

Reynolds was never likely to break traditional painting moulds in the commissioned portraits from British society members and, in any case, he was building a

formidable reputation and *oeuvre,* even if a contractual one. This in itself is sad, for he had enormous painterly talent and all the study of the great masters in Italy, with their subsequent innovations in painting, seems to have been bypassed in this quest to be a power personality in the art world.

One example of this particular type of portraiture by Reynolds is the image of the politician, wit and Satanist *George Selwyn* (Plate 3.4.3) which reveals the extent to which nothing had changed in his painting since his earlier efforts.

Plate 3.4.3 George Selwyn 1766, oil on canvas , no dimensions given by Joshua Reynolds, Private Collection http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/reynolds/roomguide5.shtm internet accessed 23 - 5 - 2005

Therefore the public was well aware of what particular style of painting Reynolds would provide. If one either sat for him by choice or upon his invitation, the outcome was more or less was assured.

3.4.4 Transcendence of time and space

The paintings of Joshua Reynolds are not traditionally revered by those who have written informatively about what makes good art over the centuries. The critic Jonathon Jones for the Guardian Newspaper puts it another way in his review of Reynolds Exhibition at the Tate Gallery in London on May 21 - 2005:

> More brutally, you might say he was a portrait factory, with a repertoire of classical poses and props. These poses and props are what stay with you, more often than not, having a meaning of their own. As they pretend to be the Apollo Belvedere or the Three Graces, Reynolds's people stand or sit in spectacular fictitious settings that weave a peculiarly British fairytale. They are in stately homes of the mind - under lofty pillars, among fine draperies, with a view over rolling parkland. Reynolds gives his people an aristocratic largeness - or, to put it another way, an imperial expansiveness. Jonathon Jones
>
> http://arts.guardian.co.uk/critic/feature/0,,1488782,00.html
>
> internet accessed 2 -10 - 2007

If anything, in some areas Reynolds was one of the most ironic painters of his time. Firstly he could paint within a certain highly crafted mannerism, with interesting surface qualities of oil paint, as witnessed seen in his painting *James, 7th Earl of Lauderdale* at The Art Gallery of New South Wales. It is a competent image mainly because Reynolds could handle all the traditional painting techniques with great savvy but that is all. Reynolds's image of *James, 7th Earl of Lauderdale* is a good image of a well known person in his time, and he of all people made sure that consistently well known persons within his societal circle were painted predictably well.

Above all else, it seems that Reynolds is remembered as a painter of societal portraits of his time and he was genuinely remembered by many famous people with great affection. The difficult thing for artists such as Reynolds to achieve was to create something unique, such as innovative idea within his painting besides good surface qualities that were, in his case, mimetic of the masters. This tradition of innovation and good surface qualities in painting should have been ever expanding within an artist's life. This was not so in the case of Reynolds, but his art has some kind of historical pictorial novelty, let's say a movie star quality about it, and one's guess is that is why his works are interesting because they tell the audience something about

the people of the day and not necessarily about what makes good art that transcends time and space and teaches the next generations.. Reynolds's art did not achieve this in his lifetime or since.

3.4.5 Constant experimentation with oil traces

Reynolds's celebrity artworks captured the British nation's heroes, aristocrats, or anybody who was regarded as somebody in English society. Given that he was already in the highest position in the British art world, Reynolds was the supreme authority in England on art during his lifetime. The problem was not the Royal Academy; it was with Reynolds's grand vision of it as a school of performative outcomes of grand mannerist history paintings studied from the Greek Classics and the Renaissance master painters.

Sadly for Reynolds, his praxis to theory was at fault because the Renaissance is about innovation in painting, not contracting to techniques. Reynolds was never likely to be an experimental painter; it does not seem to be within his temperament as a painter either, as evidenced within his life time of image making. There is a sensation of cosiness within Reynolds's images and as it appears, that he was happy making

images he could do well for his whole life. One might be expecting too much from him to experiment with his system of painting and therefore there was little or no experimentation with oil traces after he had reached a certain competency in painting.

3.4.6 Evidence of trajectory in strength and precision of visual statement

Reynolds was a painter whose statements on art were often at odds with his praxis, especially since his famous *Discourses on Art* espoused reform in English art as well as teaching the classical performative painting techniques that he blatantly pursued, used in his society portrait, and which also produced a good income for him as a painter. The Guardian Newspaper art critic Jonathon Jones, in reviewing Reynolds's paintings at the Tate Gallery in 2005, points this out in his article on how the mighty fall:

> Reynolds's Discourses on Art are definitive expressions of neoclassicism. The 15th-century Renaissance revived the art of ancient Greece and Rome but had only the roughest idea of the difference between them. The 18th

century isolated the moment of classical perfection, in Athens in the 5th century BC.

Jonathon Jones

http://arts.guardian.co.uk/critic/feature/0,,1488782,00.html

internet accessed 29 - 5 - 2006

And again Jones (2005) juxtaposes Reynolds's artistic opportunism alongside his artistic statements:

> It's tempting to compare Reynolds's theory and practice, and conclude that he was simply a hypocrite. He preached a lofty reform of British art, argued that history painting alone, the austere representation of noble or tragic events, was worthy of the highest praise - all the while making a packet painting portraits of anyone who could afford his fees. The truth is stranger. Reynolds did paint histories, such as his scene from Dante of Ugolino and his children being starved to death in a dungeon, but, more successfully, he painted portraits that aspire to the condition of history.

http://arts.guardian.co.uk/critic/feature/0,,1488782,00.html

internet accessed 29 - 5 - 2006

It is not wrong for an artist to make a living from their talents as a painter; in fact it is necessary, unless you are Cézanne who received an inheritance to sustain him as a painter. Hence there is no choice at times other than to take jobs that, from my experience, are more time consuming and take one away from the canvas or, in the case of Reynolds, commit to portrait painting where one might learn about painting or at least get used to handling paint.

So, for Reynolds, it was portraiture of the rich and famous in England; in doing this he opened the way for more money and power for himself but, as Jonathan Jones (2005) pointed out, it did make his praxis to theory statements at times somewhat contradictory of each other. Had Reynolds stated that he did portraits for honest reasons, whatever they might have been and essentially that this was separate from his serious praxis as an artist, then hypocrisy would have been replaced by integrity.

Unfortunately for Reynolds, he seemed not to have made the distinction between critical paintings and societal portraits; thus within his *oeuvre*, he confused the theory

from the master artists' innovations which was about progression in painting and turned them into a static technique, not only for his praxis but also for his students, making him somewhat of a hypocrite.

3.5 Key Personal Impacts

While Cézanne and Picasso provided positive role models, Reynolds was more of a cautionary tale. In essence he provided the stop sign on what road not to take in achieving the idiosyncratic calligraphic vision in painting. This was an important learning curve and necessary for avoiding this path has saved an enormous amount of time, resources and energy. This has been spent painting and realizing on other paths. Whether they have all been successful or not does not matter; what matters is the sign warning you of the impending dangers to the calligraphic vision. For me Reynolds was that marker and I was aware that, if I was to ignore it, then I ran the danger of becoming like him.

Cézanne's praxis to theory, in particular the objective optical sensations that he tried to paint throughout his life was and still is one of the most powerful influences. Yet it would be fair to say that he will remain an enigma for some time to come. For

Cézanne's calligraphic vision in paint traces are extraordinarily complex, with much knowledge still imbued within them for one to learn from and no doubt this learning curve that can be seen within his individual paint traces will continue into the future. Picasso's paintings reveal the extraordinary depth and variety of individual paint traces and how this can grow throughout a life time of painting. In the study, the scope of Picasso's paint marks was a revelation, not only from the point of being idiosyncratic but the sheer amount of varied calligraphic paint traces he had achieved through his copying of different styles, thus allowing one not to feel dominated by Cézanne; that there is only one way of achieving optically painted desires in art but many and this was an important learning outcome.

These two artists provided considerable insight into an individual calligraphic painterly journey which can be seen their oeuvres, thus allowing one to achieve an idiosyncratic calligraphic vision and steadily moving it outwards to an unseen horizon in painting.

Chapter 4 Pivotal Influences II (Mid career realisations of the Calligraphic Vision)

4.1 Mid Career Influences

Mid career influences spanned almost three centuries and, cumulatively, succeeded in defining a clearer focus on the idiosyncratic calligraphic vision in painting.

4.2 Peter Paul Rubens 1577 - 1640

Rubens was one of those few artists who had the luxury of a good education and some wealth behind him from start to finish in his extraordinary life as a painter. There is no doubt this helps one to establish some sort of financial worry free zone for the artist to concentrate on painting. This freedom from anxiety about survival often releases the painter to produce work that interests them and not always be reliant on commissions although, in Rubens's case, the commissions simply became a vehicle to reveal his own individual visions in painting. As Neil MacGregor, the director of the British Museum, in conversation with Jonathon Jones (2005) from The Guardian Newspaper astutely points out,

> ...the relationship of the subject to the frame is extraordinarily variable; it made him think of Rubens. He does exactly what Rubens did - in the Parker Bowles portrait he physically extended the canvas. It's about the subject having its own life.
>
> http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/features/story/0,11710,1184364,00.html
>
> internet accessed 1- 9 - 2005

Rubens was a painter who could amplify the subject matter of his chosen motif, as evidenced in Plate 4.1.1 *The Little Fur*. It is not a painting about illustration but a real situation involving his wife and himself in setting up an idea to paint which is obvious through the energy described in paint of the figuration of the pose. The limbs of the model amplify weight that manifests the presence of the painted moment upon which Rubens gazes at his wife.

4.2.1 Independence of image making

Rubens's independent attitude in painting did not come from mannerist methodologies but from ideas through which the artist was trying to execute in paint,

systems built to satisfy the artist's visions. For instance, Grombrich (1992) elaborates on Rubens's skill as a painter;

> When Rubens returned to Antwerp in 1608 he was a man of thirty-one, who had learned everything there was to be learned; he had acquired such facility in handling the brush and paint, in representing nudes and drapery, armour and jewels, animals and landscapes, that he had no rival north of the Alps.(Gombrich, 1992: 311)

The systems in painting used by Rubens were more or less reliant on what the artist's visions were revealing to him within the motif; they were built upon realizations of visual inquiry upon seeing the growing number of oil traces on the canvas altered, realized again and, no doubt, the system of painting shifted as the independence of the artist's vision manifested itself through his paint traces that had started to accumulate on the canvas.

Rubens's system in painting from his ideas of image making did not happen overnight; it was part of a calligraphic journey in painting as his brush marks were

constantly achieving a more succinct record of his sensations and shifting outwards towards the calligraphic horizon throughout his life.

It is this intense understanding of how to create a personal system of painting that Rubens had gleaned from his travels to Italy and seeing the master artworks there, together with the realizations of his own works, which created an independent space for him to develop a calligraphic vision as a painter.

4.2.2 Breaking with traditional moulds

On December 10, 1772 Joshua Reynolds, as President of the Royal Academy, delivered his Discourses to the graduating students. Within that lecture he made this appraisal of Rubens's painting:

> Indeed, the facility with which he invented the richness of his composition, luxuriant harmony and brilliancy of his colouring, so dazzle the eye that whilst his works continue before us we cannot help that all his deficiencies are full supplied. (Reynolds, 1772)

http://www.textlibrary.com/download/7discour.txt

internet accessed 1- 9 - 2005

Praise of Rubens's artistic ability by Reynolds is indeed a benefit during his epoch of power, and it is noted that, in referring to his painting, he said that *he invented.* This is the crux to breaking a mould within any tradition in painting and here it is confirmed (even if somewhat ironically by the most contractual of painters himself).

In Rubens's painting of his second wife *The Little Fur* (Plate 4.2.1), there is artifice of modesty being imposed not only by Hélène Fourment but also by Rubens himself in the way the fur is draped around the woman's thighs, thus preventing the viewer from gazing at will between them. One does not know whether either painter or model would allow the uninhibited perusal of the naked figure. What one might hypothesize is that this is an early innovation in visual censorship that has come into play, another category in art's history that has for a long time been a screen between painter and painting. Few artists have ever removed this moral filter from their vision (memory) as it seems to have installed itself upon memory (vision) like a modern computer spam virus, more or less under the premise that certain images should be hidden from view, which perhaps reflects Christian ideas of the time.

Plate 4.2.1 *The Little Fur,* 1635- 40, oil on oak panel, 176 cm h x 63 cm w by Peter Paul Rubens Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna http://www.khm.at/homeE3.html internet accessed, 11 - 9 - 2005

What is interesting about Rubens breaking of traditional painting moulds is the dexterity of his calligraphic vision (memory) that had reached a very developed stage by the time he was thirty one, thus enabling him to have attained the power of making the intermediate space between audience and power seem visually alive through his breathtaking skill as a painter. Few contemporary artists nowadays have attained that type of calligraphic vision in painting. Gombrich (1992) supports this argument in his book The Story of Art;

> He was confident that his brushworks could quickly impart life to anything, and he was right. For that was the greatest secret of Rubens's art–his magic skill in making anything alive, intensely and joyfully alive. (Gombrich, 1992: 312)

A limited number of painters before Rubens and not many afterwards have ever acquired that calligraphic storehouse of memory. He presented life in painted images like no other artist and, to this day, no other painter has transcended Rubens's innovative tradition in painting the human form.

4.2.3 Evidence of a new trajectory

Public taste in art has always ultimately been swayed by innovation in painting but often those that succeed the current stagnation of aesthetics come at a cost for the artist. Throughout history there have been many examples where the artist has had to compromise innovation in painting as in the case of Rubens:

> Not all sketches for projects met with approval; some patrons required changes. For example, Rubens executed a large oil sketch that he

described as a dissegno colorito in 1612 for a triptych for the high altar of the cathedral in Ghent depicting the Conversion of St. Bavo (National Gallery, London, no. NG57.1) Although the design was accepted by the chapter, when the bishop who had ordered the triptych died, his successor decided to erect instead a sculpted altarpiece, which in turn became the victim of changes. When yet another bishop was appointed in 1622, Rubens was at last recalled to the project. He had to abandon his original triptych design to accommodate the intervening alterations to the project but finally produced the altarpiece that still hangs in St. Bavo's Cathedral in Ghent.

http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/exhibits/rubens/essays/essay01.

internet accessed, 1- 9 - 2005

Although Rubens compromised on this occasion due to the differing aesthetics of the commissioners, it was not always the case. His own private artworks (which included the nudes) were of his own innovation in painting and there was no compromise on his part as a painter. Especially in Rubens's painting of the female

form, there seems to be no editing the sensation as he was revealing his image making in all its glowing maturity.

For Rubens the female form was one of healthiness, as evidenced in the painting *The Toilet of Venus 1612 –15.* The model's hair is silky blonde, combed into silk like strands resembling the long threads of pure gold, radiating against the servant negress who holds it, while the cherub holds the mirror, revealing her lips are a fresh petal rose colour with wide clear eyes and her back is clear of any blemishes; the fresh muscular back of the woman is like pear shaped fruit. The painting *The Toilet of Venus 1612 –15* reveals how unrepressed Rubens was as a painter, how untroubled by the religious dictates of taste at the time and hence able to break the traditional moulds of painting.

4.2.4 Transcendence of time and space

One of the measures of being one of the world's finest artists is how one's imagery is received throughout history and, as Freedberg (2005) so rightly points out in the Catalogue " *The hands of Rubens*", he was in a class all of his own:

> Never in the history of art does there seem to be so infinitesimal gap between idea and execution. Whether large or small the oil sketches takes us in the heart and mind of the painter, and reveal a fluency with the brush that was rightly celebrated in his own time has remained since.
>
> http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/exhibits/rubens/essays/essay01.html
>
> internet accessed 1- 9 - 2005

Time and space in painting is not as much about the activity of applying oil traces but the retinal reception of them upon completion, thus allowing the subsequent reflection of Rubens as a painter across various audiences and differing epochs.

Rubens's *oeuvre* in painting has endlessly captured the eyes of his audiences through time and space; it is awe at his genius, as an image-maker, that continually tantalises their sensations. This can be measured by the prominence his paintings enjoy in the major museums of the world and the subsequent scholarly insights that have been derived from his works.

Rubens's painting *The Union of Earth and Water* (see Plate 4.2.2) has captured the public imagination through history

Plate 4.2.2 *The Union of Earth and Water* 1618, oil on canvas
222.5 x 180.5 cm, by Peter Paul Rubens, Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia
http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/rubens/earth-water.jpg internet accessed 29 - 8 - 2005

The most obvious reason why it has been held within societal memory is that such painting is extraordinarily hard to do. This is the most crucial evidence of painting's staying power within community memory for they are more or less painting efforts that mere mortals cannot do.

The world's best painters often embark on painterly journeys in image making and few followers in those treks could ever equal or come near the sophistication of their oil traces; Rubens is one of those painters. The reality is that only a handful of truly fantastic painters are equal to Rubens in stopping the public in their tracks as such iconic images are very hard to accomplish. Rubens presented the world with female figuration that, to this day, continues to hold people's vision, a measure of painting transcending time and space, as evidenced in Plate 4.2.2.

4.2.5 Constant experimentation with oil traces

As a painter Rubens was in demand across Europe for his ability to conjure images and to execute them with a minimal gap between the commissioner's idea and image. Consequently his ideas in art were constantly developing for he had often to accommodate the many difficult commissions that were being offered to him.

Peter C. Sutton (2005) in his introduction to the catalogue *Drawn by the Brush*, sketches by Peter Paul Rubens, states that

> The oil sketches, particularly in his mature career, were an integral feature of Rubens's working methods and studio practices to a degree that was unprecedented in the history of art. They offer a glimpse of the creative process and, notwithstanding their intimate scale, reveal a vast range of emotion and action, condensing the power of designs covering whole walls into diminutive panels. While he immersed himself in virtually all the creative aspects of his studio's production, the oil sketches consistently embody the most direct and immediate account of his personal invention.

http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/exhibits/rubens/essays/essay01.html

internet accessed 1 - 9 - 2005

Commissioners of Ruben's art works, upon seeing his sketches, had the expectation that the final product would be very similar to what had being sighted in the oil study. Often there had to be alterations within the commissioner's painting (for example, they may have changed the design of the building so the painting was too small in a certain area) and significantly, these changes lead to Rubens's painterly invention. Essentially what drove Rubens in his painting was the phenomenon of his faith and

his unswerving belief in it as expressed in his technical virtuosity of colour, form and tone. Wedgwood (1967 comments here on the most outstanding aspects of Rubens's ability as a painter and how it was evidenced in his painting The *Deposition c.1611-14:*

> The *Deposition* was a challenge to painters because it demanded extreme technical skill in drawing, together with the power to arouse emotion in the beholder. Rubens had studied some of the most famous interpretations of the theme in Italy and his picture reveals the influence of versions by Ludovico Cigoli and Daniele da Volterra, a favourite disciple of Michelangelo. But Ruben's *Deposition*—the greatest he had ever painted and one of the greatest he was ever to paint—was both more realistic and more deeply felt than those from which he drew inspiration. To his contemporaries it was much more than a triumph of colour, form and design: it spoke to them with compelling eloquence of the central theme of their faith. (Wedgwood 1967:63)

If the *Deposition* symbolises Rubens at his apogee as a painter, it certainly did not stop him continuing to explore how art could be realised as an image. For instance,

some twenty years later in his painting *The Feast of Venus c.1630 – 40,* the invention of composition in the groupings of figures is exquisite; the visual balance of the painting allows the eye to wander throughout the image with ease. Rubens's invention in imagery was very much part of his daily praxis and life as an artist.

4.2.6 Evidence of trajectory in strength and precision of visual statement

As a diplomat Rubens was skilled and his art was used as a vehicle to negotiate through some of the political entanglements that often accompanied such duties. But diplomacy had taken its toll upon Rubens's praxis and, in the following statement, it is reported that he begged to be excused from official duties to return to his profession as a painter:

> On his return home from London to Antwerp, he also begged the Infanta, 'as the sole reward for so many efforts, exemption from such assignments, and permission to serve her in my own home. Now by divine grace, I have found peace of mind, having renounced every sort of employment outside my blessed profession. Destiny and I have become acquainted

and I cut through ambition's golden knots in order to reclaim my freedom'. (Magurn, 1955: 392)

Once freed from diplomatic duties Rubens returned to his praxis with the integrity that he had sought for his whole life. That was his inquiry into the motifs he loved, one of which was his wife Helene Fourment (see Plate 4.2.1).

4.2.7 Work emanates immediacy of vision sensation

Not all of Rubens's work deals with commissioned religious themes as evidenced in his *Self Portrait 1623,* (Plate 4.2.3) which exhibits his penetrating gaze back, confirming an immediacy as though it had just been painted.

Plate 4.2.3 *Self Portrait* 1623, oil on canvas, 91.3 cm h x 70.8 cm w by Peter Paul Rubens, National Gallery of Australia http://www.nga.gov.au/International/Catalogue/Detail.cfm?IRN=89843&ViewID=2&GalID=ALL internet accessed 11 - 5 - 2005

In Rubens's 1623 self portrait there is this unique glistening of light painted in the eyes rendering of van dyke browns, with the surrounding flesh tints and opaque skin highlights that refract off the cheek bone, creating the sensation that some artificial light is in the immediate vicinity. The technical virtuosity of the brush marks representing the facial hair around the mouth/nose is stunning in its thickness, along with a range of dark reddish brown coloured hues resembling the highlights and the dark recesses of the beard.

Painting such as Rubens has achieved here in Plate 4.2.3 is as close as one gets to creating an immediacy of vision. What makes Rubens all the more remarkable as a

painter is the fact that the paint technologies in his day were not as advanced as they are today. The oil paints he used took some considerable time to dry, necessitating certain delays in image making; yet the medium's slowness in drying does not exhibit itself in his painting and it is his genius as an artist that compensates for this lack of technology in the oil paint. More modern painters had already experienced the solution of the technical issues of oil paint drying, thus allowing them to paint with greater facility from the sensation (memory).

4.3 Rembrandt Van Rijn 1606 - 69

4.3.1 Independence of image making

Financial independence for the artist offering freedom from the time-consuming constraints of worldly burdens of working for a living oneself and dependents has mostly only been a recent event. Most painters in Rembrandt's epoch (unless they had a non-dictatorial patron) relied on commissions from well-funded authorities, so interference with the commissioned image was more or less part and parcel of the daily process of painting. Often it is thought that total freedom in painting equates with financial freedom. This is not quite true. Having money may allow one more

time to paint but it certainly does not make one necessarily free as an artist for it is also essential to break free from the shackles of the traditions of painting.

Rembrandt had acquired some financial freedoms and also continued his painterly investigations into the public surfaces of light upon the subject matter for, within his *Self Portrait as a Young Man,* there is the emergence of another important painterly issue. This was his passion for visual tactility and for trying to convey the visual sensation of touch into a paint trace on a canvas.

Few artists before Rembrandt's time in painting had attempted to convey the visual sensations one experiences during optical analysis of an object in terms of how the external surfaces might feel, equally significant to the theme of the painting itself. This seems very important for Rembrandt, as evidenced throughout his *oeuvre* of a lifelong series of self-portraits. The self-portrait series by Rembrandt reveals a developing chiaroscuro painterly idea in various lightings, along with the tactility of vision that was painted in accordance to what was being seen by aging artists. An example of Rembrandt's early experimentation with chiaroscuro is presented in Plate 4.3.1.

Plate 4.3.1 *Self Portrait as a young man* 1628, oil on canvas, 22.5 cm h x18.6 cm w by Rembrandt Van Rijn Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam Rembrandt Van Rijn, http://www.rembrandtpainting.net/slf_prtrts/slf_prtrt_c.1628.htm internet accessed 3 - 10 - 2006

In pursuing these oil painting surface traits Rembrandt was departing from the normal *modus operandi* consistent with what was being preached in art throughout his epoch. While this was not his deliberate intention, it was influenced by the praxis of painting from vision, mainly his self-portraits. It seems as though Rembrandt was displaying to the audience that painting had the capability to reveal insights into human experience by recording life's wear and tear on objects in tactile forms of oil traces on the canvas, which could give the viewer a more complete sense of the

human condition. The surface qualities of the human condition on canvas can be seen in this mid career self portrait by Rembrandt (Plate 4.3.2).

Plate 4.3.2 Self Portrait and Two Gold Chains,1642 -1643, oil on canvas 72.2 x 53.3 cm, by Rembrandt Van Rijn Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Mardid, http://www.rembrandtpainting.net/slf_prtrts/slf_prtrt_gold_chains.htm internet accessed 19 - 2 - 2008

This investigative praxis by Rembrandt not only enabled him to be a very independent image maker but greatly enlarged the human experience in a highly sophisticated painterly way that highlights him as one of painting's great communicators, no doubt enhanced by the acquisition of a life-long calligraphic vision. Rembrandt's calligraphic vision can be seen in maturity in Plate 4.3.3.

Plate 4.3.3 *Self Portrait at Age of 63*, 1669, oil on canvas, 86 x 70.5.cm, by Rembrandt Van Rijn, National Gallery of London http://www.rembrandtpainting.net/slf_prtrts/slf_prtrt_age_63.htm internet accessed 3 - 10 - 2006

4.3.2 Breaking with traditional moulds

In the unveiling of Rembrandt's painting entitled *The Night Watch,* the expectations of the commissioners ended in disappointment. They may have been expecting something akin to *The Anatomy Lesson of Nicholaes Tulip c1632* but instead they received an image that, to this day, has an effect on how portraits are painted.

Gone was the equality in importance that each individual member's face of the Night Watch had to reveal. Here was a painting that had two main characters right in the

middle of the image, with an abundance of drama within the other commissioners, who were rendered in various stages of animation as if giving directions or deep in conversation. It is a group portrait capturing a moment in time and the people were the players of that instant. For example, on the right hand side in the foreground edge, there is a man with a drum glancing towards us; behind him there are two men who are side on to the viewer in conversation. Then again, behind the main character, another man carries his musket in half subdued light while, between the two main figures, there is another man who is peering back at us between a conversation involving the two main identities. To their left a nightwatchman loads his musket, whilst a small group seem to whisper and glance intently towards the viewer with a trace of curiosity in the glance back. This is a great psychological drama encapsulated in a portrait. The drama is greatly enhanced by Rembrandt's objective analysis of the public surfaces, which have been transferred into paint traces that have become so succinct now from his painterly calligraphic storehouse of memory

The system Rembrandt used in painting *The Nightwatch* with the subdued light bellowing around the characters illuminating some and subduing others in half-light created a visually dramatic effect. Rembrandt's animating and receding of people has the sensation of the full drama of play in motion. It was a brilliant innovation in

portrait painting; nothing had existed like Rembrandt's *Night Watch* image before and it certainly changed portraiture for all time afterwards.

Unfortunately for Rembrandt, his brilliance as a portraitist was not favourably received by *The Nightwatch* commissioners as they did not intend to see themselves as an *ad hoc* messy group of men but something more gentleman like and therefore the portrait was deemed poor. As for the history's judgement of Rembrandt's *Night Watch*, it was an innovation that has transcended space and time.

4.3.3 Evidence of new trajectory

Rembrandt captured the public's attention but for all the wrong reasons whilst he was alive. The so called error of his Nightwatch portrait, being the equal recognition of the commissioners within the painting, was publicly denounced by the portrayed soldiers, thus making Rembrandt's life financially hard from then on in his artistic career, as acknowledged by Nikos Stangos (1983):

> His wife died in 1642 (the year he painted *The Night Watch*) and thereafter his affairs grew increasingly desperate until his bankruptcy in 1656. (Stangos, 1983: 277)

The public demise of Rembrandt within his lifetime as a painter did not continue after death as his name soon grew in stature; collectors came clamouring from his artworks resulting in an extraordinary number of *Rembrandts* out of proportion to the possibly achievable output within his life - so much so that scholars, with the support of the Dutch government, started to authenticate what was an original artwork and those that were judged to be fake:

> Juxtaposing paintings attributed to Rembrandt with those now rejected from his *oeuvre*, a current Metropolitan Museum exhibition reveals the confused state of Rembrandt connoisseurship. The author proposes radical revisions in the attribution process and calls for a new honesty in the claims that museums make about the works they own.

> In March 1976, the Dutch-American art historian Egbert Haverkamp - Begemann was consulted by the Metropolitan Museum of Art concerning

a painting that had been donated to the museum by Charles S. Payson as a Rembrandt the year before. The Met put to him the question it now puts to us in a fascinating exhibition of unprecedented honesty: Rembrandt or not Rembrandt? *Portrait of a Young Man with a Beret* certainly looked like a Rembrandt, with its extreme chiaroscuro and the sitter's outmoded costume and soulful expression. It read like a Rembrandt: since the Berlin museum director Gustav Waagen had published it in 1854 as an original of "extraordinary power," it had been included in every catalogue of the master's work. And it moved like a Rembrandt from one prestigious exhibition to the next, up to and including the 1956 commemorative show in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, where it was praised for its "extraordinary liveliness and intensity."

Yet the responsible curator, John Walsh, had good reason to doubt whether the portrait was a Rembrandt. In the late 1960s, a major purge of Rembrandt paintings had begun, and no attributions were safe anymore. From the mid-1930s to the mid-'60s, the field had credited a corpus of some 620 paintings published by Abraham Bredius in 1935 and reaffirmed, with a small number of additions and deletions, by Jakob

Rosenberg in 1948 and 1964. But in 1965 Kurt Bauch, applying sharper critical standards than Rosenberg, removed some 70 items from his catalogue of Rembrandt paintings, and in 1968 Horst Gerson excised 130 more, reducing the total to 420. The Rembrandt Research Project (RRP), initiated in the same year, was threatening to prune the corpus yet more drastically. In this climate, the appearance and movements of the Portrait of a Young Man with a Beret were more likely to arouse than allay suspicion. (Gary Schwarta - Art In America – December 1995)

http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1248/is_n12_v83/ai_17860698#continue internet accessed 12 - 10 - 2005

The tenacity of people or institutions trying to prove that they owned an authentic Rembrandt reveals that, if he did nothing else, he certainly broke the paradigms of how paintings could exist, thereby capturing the public's attention and increasing demand for acquisition of his art into public and private collections. Few artists such as Rembrandt have caused official inquiries of this extent into the authenticity of their artworks after death. Such attention suggests that the public certainly appreciated innovation in painting and that it is still in demand.

4.3.4 Transcendence of time and space

Rembrandt's popularity as a painter was *par excellence* and that sentiment resonates just as strongly now as it ever did within his epoch. More specifically, *The Night Watch* painting is one of the world's top twenty most recognizable and iconic images in art.

The issue is why does Rembrandt maintain such luminary status as a painter long after his death? What entrances people about his paintings now? Why are retrospectives of his artworks continually being arranged in the great art spaces of the world? These questions are perhaps best answered through analysis of his painting *A woman bathing in a Stream* c.1654 (Plate 4.3.4).

Plate 4.3.4 *Woman Bathing,* 1655, oil on oak, 61.8 cm x 47 cm, Rembrandt Van Rijn http://essentialvermeer.20m.com/rembrandt/rmbrndt_1636-1654/woman_bathing.htm, internet accessed 10 - 12 - 2005

In this work the paint handling in the drapery is amazing, free from painterly mannerisms of epochs or styles. The highlights on the gown in a range of off whites, and low toned fawn hues intertwine with a series of long brushed whitish greys that sit next to high keyed whitish yellow ochre brush marks to represent the refraction of light on the woman's top.

Rembrandt's painting of the gown on the female is so calligraphically succinct from immediate memory or vision (memory) that few painters could ever articulate oil paint as competently, let alone come close to such mastery with the brush, whether

from eastern or western civilizations. The range of thickness of the paint marks exhibits almost the same visual sensations now, as no doubt it did when Rembrandt painted the image. This transient painted quality, something that had its moment of life as it was painted but communicates memory of Rembrandt's vision with a freshness of *now,* reveals that painting can still echo a painter's vision through space and time, which is extraordinary.

Why Rembrandt's painting does this cannot always be explained in pure and simple terms, mainly because memory itself cannot, to date, be scientifically pinned down. In the Rembrandts encountered through recent travelling exhibitions in Japan - and there have been several (Kawamura Collection, Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art, Dresden In Japan, The State Collections, Dresden - a Mirror to the World, Hyogo Prefecture Museum of Art, Japan) - there is a mesmeric quality to them; dissection of this quality and quantity in academic measures really does them little service. It is rather like saying one loves children; how could anybody measure that through time and space. Moreover how does one explain love's transience accurately through the differing epochs of time as memory is like light on earth, shifting through dull to bright, never static depending on what filters the clouds put in its way. All one can

do is give a descriptive analysis of the events or the feelings taking place when encountered and no doubt this may change on the next contact.

In saying that, in the context of Rembrandt's painting, there are really no accurate measures for his paintings other than to acknowledge that they have increased in stature throughout time and space. The artistic audience, confronted by such genius in painting as rendered by Rembrandt, is challenged to realise their own skills as artists. They were never going to surpass his image making ability as evidenced in *The Woman Bathing* and maybe that is the measure of why it remains so powerful an image through time and space.

4.3.5 Constant experimentation with oil traces

One of the most remarkable legacies left by Rembrandt is his own self-portraits painted throughout his life and the extent to which they give a reasonably precise insight into his idiosyncratic calligraphic vision. For instance, take his very early portrait of himself in 1629 in which the paint marks are almost in the mannered academic tradition of portraiture, His face contains none of the latter hallmarks

(impasto type oil traces) but are smooth, manicured thus creating a sort of idealized painted face.

In contrast to this earlier portrait of 1629 there is a mid-career painting entitled; *Self Portrait 1640* that reveals him as a more self assured and competent painter, not only in the way the oil traces are applied but in the mannerism of the pose, which has been based on the great master works of Raphael's *Portrait of Baldassre 1514 - 15.*

Nonetheless, the application of oil traces in this mid career artwork is extremely good. Rembrandt's face has oil traces of light rose madder tones on the cheek that protrude slightly in front of the sockets of his eye and start to reveal the creases of age (he was 34 when he painted this image), along with the slight unevenness of the face, painted with very subtle tonal changes in flesh yellows, pale whites and greys. The ornate collar that juxtaposes the face is sophisticatedly painted, revealing deep insight into the tactility of painted material which is far more advanced than the earlier portrait of his youth. It is this painterly dexterity in how oil traces can be used to acquire a sensation as evidenced in the collar that builds towards the calligraphic vision upon which Rembrandt built throughout his life as a painter.

Rembrandt's achievement of acquiring his idiosyncratic calligraphic vision throughout his life is again be evidenced in his *Self Portrait 1669*. Gone are the mannerisms of painting, now replaced with a painterly vision through his calligraphic oil traces executed with an individuality that, to this day, has not been surpassed. On the nose of the *Self Portrait 1669* there are oil traces brushed on with such confidence and laced with natural vision, seemingly roughly hewn but with such precision in vision through the use of colour and tone that it creates a breathtaking image. For instance, the pink cadmium reds against the pale flesh yellows of the nose exhibit the aging artist; underneath the nose are the hues and tones in flesh yellow purple greys which maintain the volume of the painter's nostrils.

Throughout Rembrandt's lifetime of portraits there is the evidence that he experimented with the oil traces over his whole life, not satisfied with his ability at the age of thirty-four or, for that matter, any period of his life, even though it represented a great achievement at the time.

Having himself as the motif, Rembrandt allowed an immediacy of vision and, through this, he realised that time changes the motif (that being himself) and the oil

traces shifted according to the painter's subject matter. Rembrandt was ahead of his epoch in understanding the nature of vision, time worked and the need to shift the system in painting that could accommodate the shifting application of oil traces to adopt natural vision in painting. Plate 4.3.5 reveals the full extent of Rembrandt's experimentation throughout his life as a painter.

Plate 4.3.5 '*Self Portrait at the age of 63*' 1669, oil in canvas, 86 cm x 70.5 cm by Rembrandt Van Rijn, National Gallery of London, http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/cgibin/WebObjects.dll/CollectionPublisher.woa/wa/artistBiography?artistID=596 internet accessed 4 - 8 - 2008

4.3.6 Evidence of trajectory in strength and precision of visual statement

Rembrandt's self-portraits, in a way, are a kind of theoretical statement from praxis. While this might seem unusual, it is only a very recent phenomenon in painting's history that artists actually research and document their own work in the context of their own praxis.

Rembrandt's painterly statement, as evidenced in his lifelong series of portraits (Plates 4.2.1 to 4.3.6) is revealed through his innovative traces of paint. Rembrandt's painting research is what one might clarify as an objective humanity in painting from the public surfaces of nature. Humanity in painting is about a kind of visual record of how light appears on objects, revealing the aging, discolouring action or the youthfulness and freshness of his self portraits.

Rembrandt's concerns in the visual tactile elements of vision pass through the nervous system to then be manifested into paint traces as important as the idea; he did not focus on one more than the other in his praxis. This became his life long search into a visual synthesis manifested in paint. Not only was Rembrandt one of the first Dutch artists to deconstruct the mannerisms of painting into something more

personal, original and innovative, he was also one of the few artists in history who painted extraordinarily well until his death, giving the world a lasting legacy of record that remains somewhat intact to this day. He was a painter whose oil traces equalled the intentionalities of his theory.

4.3.7 Work emanates immediacy of vision sensation

Rembrandt's supposed (as there are no complete records it can only be assumed to be his last portrait) final self portrait image (Plate 4.3.6) could be suggested as the apogee of his praxis in how the immediacy of natural vision exhibits itself.

Plate 4.3.6 *Self Portrait*, 1669, oil on canvas, 63.5 x 57.8cm,The Hague, Rembrandt Van Rijn http://www.mystudios.com/rembrandt/rembrandt-paintings-1669.html internet accessed 12 - 10 - 2005

For example, in Plate 4.3.6, there is the evidence that no longer does Rembrandt rely on the mannerisms of chiaroscuro but that technique is maintained to match his personal synthesis in painting and, within this image, there is a remarkably more softened play of light in front of the figure and behind, indicating that vision/painting are interacting instead of some mannerism of traditional techniques being used to achieve an image.

One of the most wonderful and direct sensations of painting can be seen in the hat worn by Rembrandt. The execution of this painting reveals traces in a range of brushed silver greys with several hues of light tones, burnt sienna ochres, placed from the right hand top of the head and strategically but elegantly brushed slantwise downwards to the left had side top of the head. This is fantastic sensation in painting; it really is a benchmark for direct vision.

Then the left hand eye in Plate 4.3.6 is painted with the same mastery of brush marks that is omnipresent throughout the painting; within the eye's retina there is a soft light penetrating, illuminating the aging grey hues of the eye. Only an artist who had carefully studied the eye in various aspects of engagement with light could accumulate enough knowledge and skill to execute the power of the gaze back from

the eye. The skin around the eye is in a range of chicken fats and raspberry, light burnt sienna hues in a range of tints that reflect the gradation of light into shadow. The artist's nose reveals the effects of age and the subsequent wear and tear upon it by life, along with the elements of weather.

If this is Rembrandt's last self-portrait, then it is somewhat of a triumph in painterly vision that one would find hard to eclipse as a painter of sensation that extended his own calligraphic vision outwards to parameters in painting that have not been surpassed thus far.

4.4 Key Personal Impacts

It was not enough to have an original idea in painting, even though it took a long time to achieve through research as seen in Object Painting. Something was still nagging and, from the memory of seeing a Rubens or Rembrandt painting, it quickly became apparent that sensation from the paint traces on their canvas was missing in mine. While, even in a lifetime of image making few artists ever get close to the pinnacle of oil marks, it was nevertheless necessary to try.

The intelligence of the paint marks within Rubens's or Rembrandt's paintings was really profound and no doubt beneficial as an object of study in mid career because the effect on one's own image making was not only immediate but also intimidating because of the sheer magnitude of the painterly journey ahead to even acquire calligraphic painting skills that came even close to those being exhibited by these masters.

Chapter 5 Pivotal influences III (Career Maturity)

5.1 20th Century Realization of the Calligraphic Influences

The choice of these artists is more to do with the current motifs that are being painted in praxis because they have taken similar paths outwards towards the calligraphic horizon and therefore they seemed appropriate subjects from which to glean knowledge as artists.

5.2 Giorgio Morandi 1890 - 1964

Modern painting is not forged by movements of artists, despite the rhetoric that surrounds the Impressionists and what they achieved as a group. It manifested itself through each individual artist pursuing a synthesis of vision in painting.

In his late career as an artist, Morandi produced works that reveal just how far he had travelled outwards in blazing his own idiosyncratic calligraphic within his painting as can be seen in Plate 5.2.1.

Plate 5.2.1 *Bottles and Fruit-Bowl (Bottigliee fruttiera)* 1916, oil on canvas, 60 x 54 cm by Giorgio Morandi, Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice http://www.guggenheim-venice.it/inglese/collections/artisti/dettagli/opere_dett.php?id_art=173&id_opera=400&page= internet accessed: 6 - 8 - 2008

5.2.1 Independence of image making

Morandi is a painter who has chosen to paint the individual synthesis. However all such routes have histories in relation to such journeys and his was, at times in the beginning, associated with other artistic movements, such as the Metaphysical School referenced by Stangos (1993) thus:

Metaphysical Painting (It. pittura metphisica).

Term used of the work of the Italian painters de Chirico and Carra between about 1910 and 1920. Their use of dream imagery in architectural fantasies and the juxtaposition of incongruous elements foreshadowed certain aspects of Surrealism. (Stangos, 1993: 221)

Morandi's flirtation with this group of painters was only fleeting, yet significant because his paintings toured Germany in 1921 with the group and again later in 1922. Nevertheless there is still conjecture from the group as to how involved he was at the ideological level. Given that Morandi did exhibit with them, there must have been some sympathy at the beginning but it was an association that was soon disrupted more by the demands and desires of an idiosyncratic vision which conflicted with the group's concerns.

During Morandi's lifetime as a painter, there was considerable pressure upon him and other artists to disregard the traditions of representation and Abstract Painting was just one of forces with which he had to contend in Italy. Nonetheless, Morandi set up his painting praxis in his traditional family home, shared with his three sisters and mother, to concentrate on limited but infinitely varied arrangements of ceramic

motifs. These objects became a lifelong passion to paint, similar to the role played by the waterlilies for Claude Monet.

Morandi summed up his passion for portraying the ceramics in what might be considered a representational and conservative mannerism in painting in an interview with the "Voice of America" on the 25th April 1957: *What interests me most is expressing what's in nature, the visible world that is.* By nature Morandi meant the public surfaces of light as it falls upon the motif, illuminating it so it can be coherently sighted by the artist, so that how he sees it within his picture using the influence of delay and memory plane can then be painted.

How Morandi saw the public surfaces on the motif as he painted was becoming idiosyncratic in relationship to the artistic movements that were evolving around him. For Morandi, painting these seemingly pedestrian ceramic objects of the everyday was quite normal and eventually, through time and the toil of painting consistently on a singular motif, it would turn into a calligraphic vision.

5.2.2 Breaking with traditional moulds

Breaking traditional moulds in painting is not necessarily intended to be a radical departure from the medium of painting; more to the point, it tends towards a nebulous point of one's visual existence. Achievements of this in painting are when the painter follows an idiosyncratic synthesis of vision against the prevailing trends in painting or taught methodologies of image making.

For instance, in Morandi's epoch of painting, there were several artistic forces within the art world that, more or less and for various reasons, tended to oscillate around each other vying for artificial dominance within the art world (one is not sure if this was for power or collector wealth). Abstract painting between 1940 - 50 (which was the establishment of a new aesthetic) and Salon art school painting (that was maintaining the established paradigms of visual taste in a kind of suspended animation) were two dominant painterly aesthetic movements in Morandi's time. By keeping his distance from these two antagonists, he was able to find his own personal synthesis in painting.

The achievement of breaking away from traditional movements in art by Morandi was no easy feat. It happens almost by phenomenological means, as Giles Deleuze (1925 - 1995) explains:

> Then there would be yet another hypothesis, more 'phenomenological.' The levels of sensation would really be domains of sensation that refer to different sense organs; but precisely at each level, each domain would have a way of referring to the others, independently of the represented object they have in common. Between colour, a taste, a communication that would constitute the 'pathic' (non representative) movement of the sensation. (Deleuze, 2005: 30)

No doubt Morandi used all the sense resources within his praxis to paint what one might be considered a reduced selection of ceramic objects which he endlessly arranged into a personal sort of visual tension which appealed to his sensibility as a painter throughout his whole life. For instance, it is known that many of his friends knew what Morandi desired as a gift from time to time, that being something ceramic and, like any other ordinary person that accepts a gift, there is the almost automatic (if unconscious ritual) of sensory examination.

More than likely the examination would be inclusive of touch, sight and smell and all the sensations would collect, at some form of central gathering point in memory, thus giving the person some overall idea as to whether the object is friendly, hostile, beautiful, distasteful etc..., hence allowing the receiver to decide either in a favourable or unfavourable way and, in Morandi's case, whether the object was to be included into his motifs or not.

Thus if, in accepting the object to be included in his motifs, as evidenced in paintings *Bottles 1916,* all the needed visual sense data received from optical engagement with the motif would be painted into the image, that being the colour, contrasts, texture (smooth or rough) and pattern of the objects; all would ultimately be represented as his personal synthesis in painting articulated through oil traces. This individual system was used by Morandi throughout his life in painting. His work helped break the moulds of traditions and confronted the societal comfort zone.

5.2.3 Evidence of new trajectory

Morandi was not as obvious a breaker of moulds in painting as some other artists but there is no doubt that, in his own way, through the dogma of his praxis in painting,

he shifted from a representational style towards a central but idiosyncratic mode of painting. For instance, Plate 5.2.2 exemplifies what might be perceived as a mixture of the progressive painting qualities of the modern movement and something that clings to the sentiments of the past, like the genres of Northern European still life painting between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, as seen in the artworks of Willem Kalf (1622-93). Like Morandi, Kalf spent a lifetime painting a similar still life motif to make great painting which was not so much about the subject matter but how paint qualities could be rendered from what was observed within the still life.

Plate 5.2.2 *Still Life* 1946, oil on canvas, 37.5 cm x 40 cm, by Giorigo Morandi, Tate Gallery London. http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=10277&searchid=12174&tabview=image internet accessed 24 - 4 - 2006

Although, as Morandi acknowledged in his interview with the *Voice of America* on the 25th April 1957, he was interested in the visible world through the public surfaces

of objects, it is obvious that surface simplicities of painting greatly influenced his motifs. In his painting *Still Life 1946*, there are five objects strategically arranged with the largest jug being central, while the others act like lunar moons around it, composed to generate some kind of visual tension, with the slightest hints of colour just to make the optics of the viewer travel gently throughout the picture plane.

These small but not so simply painted still life motifs did not, in themselves, break the moulds of painting. It was Morandi's modulation of the oil traces on the canvas from that which he had sensed within the picture plane, which was very different from the events happening within the contemporary world of painting. In the background of the painting *Still Life 1946*, there is on the right hand side a large rectangular square underpainted in a light grey and, upon its rectangular colour base, there is another overpainted hue of a greyish burnt sienna tone, brushed in with wide horizontal strong strokes. This small area of painting takes on a very contemporary feel of some optical sensation that has been applied with urgent immediacy so to not to let the sensation escape application by the painter's brush.

On the left hand side of the painter, there is the same vital manifestation of horizontal brush marks in a much darker raw umber greyish tone representing a surface with far

less light refracting from it. This also illuminates the whitish ceramic objects that have been placed in front of the background. The greyish hues of the background descend from the top of the canvas to encompass almost three quarters of the canvas where the table displaying the ceramic objects cuts the visibility of the corner wall. The corner walls (background) meet strategically just to the right of what is the middle of the picture plane and, representing this juncture in the wall, is a large flat greyish brush that runs vertically from the top and curves slightly to the right hand side. Morandi has woven the oil traces in a condensed matter, compact but retaining a sense of space within the image.

These types of brush marks reveal a very independent attitude in painting and shift to smaller or larger paint traces depending on what the painter has recognized within the surface of the objects. They do not represent formulae but ongoing learning curves of calligraphic vision which are vital to any painter's enhancement as an artist which, in their own way, break the mould and traditions that surround them during their painterly epochs.

5.2.4 Transcendence of time and space

In the still life painting (Plate 5.2.3), there is a rawness about the paint handling within the image's hues and composition, although the competently placed assemblages of the ceramic objects seem to cause no obvious effects or visual discomfort. There is, however, a visual rupture with the shadows behind them which tends to distract the vision away from the main motif.

The paint qualities in the background have been applied with what has been recognized as hues of slightly varied mid tan yellow ochres exhibiting traits of the mannerist modernist tradition of painting, not dissimilar to the Euston Road School of Painting in London.

Plate 5.2.3 *Still life* 1939, oil on canvas, 41.5 cm x 47.3 cm by Giorgi Morandi, Museo Morandi, Italy
http://www.museomorandi.it/english/sec_pag.htm
internet sighted 14 - 2 - 08

In the painting Still Life 1939, the whitish hues on the ceramic objects resonate the traits of paint handling in the trained ideas of light and shade timidly rendered and not totally convincing in the sense of evidence that Morandi is yet in command of his idiosyncratic vision. However these are early and turbulent days in Morandi's career and the path to good painting was still an extended and sometime tortuous path.

If one analyses his later works, there is a succinctness of vision which reveals itself in his paint handling. For instance, in Plate 5.2.4 there is a flatter form within the image achieved through the avoidance of painterly issues such as getting the traditions of oil painting accurate.

Plate 5.2.4 *Still Life* 1949, oil on canvas, 25cm x 35 cm by Giorgio Morandi, Museo Morandi, Italy
http://www.museomorandi.it/english/sec_pag.htm
internet accessed 8 - 5 - 2006

Morandi is now painting with a more direct application from visual sensation, as if the moment seen were almost simultaneously applied onto the canvas. The delay

between reflected memory from sight and the activity is at its optimal level of delay between sight and application.

So within the painting (Plate 5.2.4) there is a modernity of vision that amplifies Morandi's uncanny ability to apply paint with minimal delay, thus conferring on the image the capacity to transcend time and space through the ambience of that sensation.

5.2.5 Constant experimentation with oil traces

For most of his painting life Morandi was not a painter who constantly experimented with oil traces, but he refined the oil traces into an extensive range of hue, tone and contrasts which his limited quiver of brushes allowed him to articulate on to canvas. Morandi's painting methodology is somewhat like the praxis of a dancer. For a ballerina, for example, the idea is to master a series of movements with unlimited nuances but contracted to ballet. Unlike Picasso (who, had he been a dancer, would have experimented with almost every form of dance and copied every style in a shameless desire to be the best), Morandi's research was more structured. So one could not say that Morandi was experimenting in oil traces but rather how to apply

what he already knew in a more sophisticated system. Consequently he was striving to extend the synthesis of his images and thus, no doubt, subtly extending the parameters of his calligraphic vision in painting.

5.2.6 Evidence of a trajectory in strength and precision of visual statement

On the Voice of America radio, Morandi made the following statement about his art in 1957: "What interests me most is expressing what's in nature, the visible world that is." Plates 5.2.5 and 5.26 by Morandi are forty four years apart, giving ample evidence that he was concerned only with how to render the appearance of a carefully constructed visible world within his studio.

Plate 5.2.5 *Still Life* 1920, oil on canvas, 30.5 x 44 cm, by Giorgio Morandi, Museo Morandi Italy
http://www.museomorandi.it/english/sec_pag.htm
internet accessed 11 - 5 - 2006

Plate 5.2.6 *Still Life* 1964, oil on canvas, 25.5 cm x 30.5 cm, by Giorgio Morandi, Museo Morandi Italy
http://www.museomorandi.it/english/sec_pag.htm
internet accessed 11 - 5 - 2006

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The objects he chose to paint were well known to him. Nothing seemed to rupture his innate desire to articulate the calligraphic vision in the most sophisticated terms possible for a painter. Morandi's statement seems to confirm his desire for the need to travel far away from the constraints of mannerist painting in order to embrace an idiosyncratic style. He did so consistently and pursued it almost monastically for it was extremely important for him to keep distraction from his ideas and praxis.

Such painterly paths require a certain type of self belief and self discipline to maintain the conviction that one is correct in pursuing such a painterly course. Time and delay are the measures trialled by artists and art historians alike. Morandi is one such painter who did succeed and there has been ample documentation that his pursuit was justified; for example, one event that consolidated his place in art's

history was his exhibition at the Tate Modern Gallery in London between 22 May – 12 August 2001. History does not allow good painting to go unnoticed and good painters must have the strength to survive unnoticed within their own living history, like the French painter Paul Cézanne, who was more or less excluded from public view until his death. So, for Morandi, there is no doubt that his statement is coherent with the paint traces on the canvas. The precision in his statement and the strength of his painting reflect an artist that was successful.

5.2.7 Work emanates immediacy of vision sensation

As far as one can discern, Morandi was strategic in setting up his still life. It seems as though he was extremely thoughtful in the process of arranging objects to paint, somewhat like a chess player, waiting for the right moment to say checkmate and start painting. Like the game of chess, there is a limited but seemingly infinite variety of moves to execute during the game and throughout life as a painter. Like the chess expert, Morandi was both patient and diligent in setting up a satisfactory combination for each motif to be painted.

This patient arrangement of objects by Morandi was equally matched by his desire to paint the immediate sensation that was in front of him. There is no doubt about this because the amount of time involved in the assemblage of the objects paid off in terms of the light, colour, relationships between object and in association with the background of the motif.

For instance, in Plate 5.2.7 there are several clues that Morandi is painting from in front of the motif.

Plate 5.2.7 *Sill life*, 1960, oil on canvas, 35.5 x 40.5 by Giorgi Morandi. Museo Morandi, Italy
http://www.museomorandi.it/english/sec_pag.htm
internet accessed 12 - 5 - 2005

In the front right hand side of the work is a cream coloured ceramic cylinder; on its left hand side facing the other objects, there is a brownish orange refraction of light from the rustic ceramic object behind the middle tanned, brown coloured one in the

middle of the motif. Morandi's handling of these subtle traces needed to come from first hand immediacy of observation and not from performatively trained outcomes such as those emanating from academic salons from the eighteenth century and espoused in their technical books as described here by Spurling (1998);

> Matisse was surprised to see his fellow students perfecting their life drawing by working not from the model but from studies by previously successful candidates stored in the Beaux - Arts library. (Spurling, 1998: 66)

Again, within the same area of Plate 5.2.7, given that Morandi was working directly from the motif, there is the refraction of hue from the right hand ceramic cream coloured object subtly reflected upon the rustic and tanned ceramic cylinders. This is instigated by the light within the picture plane. These reflections of whitish cream hues on the two nearest ceramic objects are subtly seen nuances by Morandi, not manufactured but coherently rendered in intelligent traces of oil, with immediacy from vision.

The factual evidence derived from Morandi's painting is seen in the oil traces within his canvasses, along with some of his own statements in art, thus allowing him to extend the calligraphic horizon in painting through his own system of painting.

5.3 Lucien Freud 1922 –

The paintings of the living artist Lucien Freud resonate through the idiosyncratic calligraphic vision which he developed, through his praxis, by creating a system of painting that would allow the oil traces on the canvas to be as close as possible to the remembrances of the vision sighted within his picture plane.

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5.3.1 Independence of image making

In Plate 5.3.1 there is the developing praxis of Freud's lifelong obsession with human figuration; the model happens to be his first wife who was pregnant at the time.

Plate 5.3.1 *Girl with white dog,* 1950 - 51, oil on canvas 762 x 1016 mm frame: 954 x 1200 x 92 mm, by Lucien Freud, Tate Gallery London http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=4548&searchid=7559&tabview=image internet accessed 19 -12 - 2005

Lucien Freud is a painter whose *oeuvre* evolved from examination of the human form, more or less devoid of clothing. His reasoning for not using clothing upon his models is clarified in his own statement quoted by Feaver (2002):

> 'The dog isn't free, it can't do otherwise, it gets a scent and instinct does the rest'. And to a dog, of course, names mean little and titles and reputations are nothing. The appetites so undisguised in a dog—hunger and lust, the desire for comfort, exercise, sleep reassurance—are the most

exposed when people take their clothes off and shed their facades. (Feaver, 2002: 41)

Painting the needs or the wants of condition in humans which can be seen in the public surfaces of one's anatomy seems to be Freud's main ambition in painting from the beginning of his career as a painter. To paint the human condition is not easy. In Plate 5.3.1 the image of his first wife and the family dog is by no means a convincing one. The flesh of the sitter is a pasty whitish hue, almost anaemic, modelled on the classical mannerisms of the French painter Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1770 - 1867), whose own painting of the figure used almost monotonal hues of flesh, with contrasts to convey a sense of form. The paint at this particular epoch of Freud's painting also lacked the tactility of vision that one senses when viewing the human motif. Within this particular image of his wife, there is only a sense of illustration of the skin. It lacks any presence or personality even though it is modelled through the contrasting lights and darks that circumnavigate the flesh through the daylight that is filtering in through the window from the right hand side of the painting. This particular way of handling flesh Freud was achieving so far in his painting did create the independent image. However, compared to later works and the hindsight of history, this lacks conviction in the way the oil traces render the flesh.

Change in his praxis of rendering human flesh can be evidenced within an image in 1975, when a friend introduced Freud to a new oil painting hue. This was a critical moment when a shift in the system of rendering an image actually prompted a quantum leap in Freud's image making as Feaver (2002) notes here:

> A friend of Katy McEwan's at the Slade had been using Cremnitz white, she told Freud, a lead white so dense it was practically sculptural. Good for flesh, he decided: excellent for the solidarity of flesh within aired spaces. (Moves to ban it, on health grounds, were to worry him for some years later.) Cremnitz white formed the bulge in the neck and the dip in the upper lip in the *Magnificent Head of the Big Man* 1975 [no.79] and the skin beneath the springing hair in Frank Auerbach 1975 - 6 [no.80], a head clenched in thought. 'For me the painting is the person'. (Feaver, 2002: 33)

So for Freud, the system he was developing towards the motif he had chosen to paint was the very thing that gave him his independence as an image maker. Something as seemingly insignificant as advice from another colleague on a particular paint served to crystallize his whole independent synthesis as a painter.

5.3.2 Breaking with traditional moulds

Freud has never been one of the great innovators in painting in the sense that he is no Rembrandt, Rubens or Titian. Painting for Freud meant breaking the traditions imposed on him and others by the societal memory of the *avant garde* still lingering in the halls of art's power and acting like a nebulous cancerous mist to the idiosyncratic vision of painting's presence. Those who are in the thrall of this intellectually brain numbing, fungicidal art never creep out of the shadows and, only when enough light is shone upon its shallow concepts, does the audience see the artwork for what it is, total incompetence reliant, it seems, on a diatribe of arcane words, as The Guardian Newspaper critic Adrian Searle points out about the English artist Damien Hirst:

> According to Art Review magazine, and its latest Power 100 list, he is. It apparently based its decision on Hirst's earnings, fame and importance as an artist. But when did anyone ever believe lists like this were anything more than an attention-grabbing come-on designed to boost magazine sales?

> Hirst's power, such as it is, lies in a reputation impermeable to criticism, having enough money to live and make art as he wishes, and an unaccountable ability to fill more column inches than any serious adult could sensibly want. His recent photorealist paintings have sold for reputedly enormous sums, and few museums can afford him. But what recent Hirsts would they want, anyway?
>
> http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/critic/feature/0,1169,1606157,00.html
>
> internet accessed 4 - 4 - 2008

Whether Freud would agree with this is another issue but, in London from whence he hails, there is certainly a mentality like no other. One might suggest that this potentially derives from the British establishment. Indeed what might be regarded as a flaw by some was Freud's pandering to the tyranny of societal memories by painting the Queen (Plate 5.3.2) which might be as seen as a compromise.

Plate 5.3.2 *Portrait of HRH Queen Elizabeth II*, oil on canvas 15cm w 22 cm by Lucian Freud, The Royal Collection. http://education.guardian.co.uk/higher/arts/story/0,,623519,00.html internet accessed 14 - 2 - 2008

Nonetheless, Freud did avoid allowing his praxis to be directed by societal establishment circles within his painterly calligraphic journey towards his own horizon through being solely focused on his own concentration in vision and how that could be revealed in painting As he stated, *I don't want them to be sensational... but I want them to reveal some of the results of my concentration.* (cited by Feaver: 2002, 13) and it was this concentration that allowed Freud to avoid the dictates of taste that were evolving around in him in the art world of London at that time.

5.3.3 Evidence of new trajectory

For most of his active life of a painter, Freud's images derived from motifs in human conditions more or less outside what one might call fashionable or so called post-modern art, whatever that might mean. Post modernism in painting is a bit like Peter Fuller's (1989) Theoria, a nice word supposedly describing a new aesthetic. An alternative argument is that it might not exist as art academics have a tendency to create new words for ideas that do lack credibility even as empirical phenomena.

There can be no conclusive evidence that Freud has broken any moulds with innovation in painting (as he is still alive and his final image has not yet been completed) but he has certainly worked to improve his own cast as a painter. His early successes in art did not stop him exploring further with a brush what was being recognised by his optics from the public surfaces of the model and how he could manipulate these new sensations of human condition in very succinct calligraphic paint marks onto canvas.

For instance, in an early painting by Freud *titled Restrained palette*: *Girl In Bed 1952, a Portrait of Caroline Blackwood* (Plate 5.3.3), he was attempting to experiment with

a limited palette in order to achieve some sort of objective clarity without the array of hues that sometimes accompany the influence of memory when painting directly from the motif and are added to the palette, either unconsciously or habitually. In this case he was very aware of what the idea was before the praxis commenced.

Plate 5.3.3 *Restrained palette: Girl in Bed* 1952, Portrait of Caroline Blackwood, oil on canvas, no dimensions given by Lucien Freud, Private Collection http://www.telegraph.co.uk/arts/graphics/2002/06/19/badorm2.jpg sighted internet accessed 14 - 7 - 2006

Hence, the *Restrained palette: Girl in the Bed* is a very intensely observed objective painting. There is no psychodrama in this as it is what was manifested through objective vision with a deliberately sparse palette. The traces of oil seemed to be

nowhere near the surety of the later works as evidenced in his painting *After Cezanne* (Plate 5.3.4).

Plate 5.3.4 *After Cezanne*, 1999 – 2000, oil on canvas, 214.0 cm x 215.0 irregular by Lucian Freud, Australian National Gallery
http://www.nga.gov.au/freud/ internet accessed 7- 8 - 2005,

In the painting *After Cézanne* there is evidence that Freud is no longer dogged by the insecurity of his calligraphic vision. Rather he is in command of it after a lifetime of painting, and is therefore looking for new aesthetic challenges regarding how a painting might work as an image. The aesthetic challenge to which Freud is responding in *After Cézanne* he achieves through compositional means, as is

evidenced by the additional rectangular canvas, as well as the image in the top left hand corner of the painting which makes it irregular although it still works as an image. Ironically, the aforementioned painting was not noted as different in terms of breaking compositional convention when purchased by the Australian National Gallery. Freud's contribution to painting is in the way figuration shifted in modern painting, not so much in being completely new but a shade different. He was at the forefront of the move in shifting the perceptual mould of rendering the human form and the public appears to accept his developed calligraphic vision.

5.3.4 Transcendence of time and space

Since Freud is still working as a painter, one might suggest that it is a little too early to make definitive statements about whether his work will ultimately travel across time and space convincingly. One could speculate on seeing Freud's painting *Naked Man with Rat 1977-78* at The Art Gallery of Western Australia, that there is evidence that this particular painting does have the potentiality to travel time and space like those of Rembrandt or Rubens.

5.3.5 Constant experimentation with oil traces

Above all things Freud is an artist who experiments with oil traces to attain the optimum direct sensation in painting from the model. In Plate 5.3.4 the title *Restrained palette: Girl in the Bed* alone indicates that Freud was experimenting with oil traces through a specific palette for, within the image, there is an opacity of hue that inscribes human flesh. However the separation of forms is almost left up to the contrasts of light and dark and the opacities of hues instead of rendering the colour accurately as seen on human flesh.

Against this experiment is the painting *Naked Man with Rat 1977-78,* which is richer in hues and more descriptive of human flesh in terms of tactility and demonstrates where Freud is starting to develop many of his idiosyncratic calligraphic painting traits and experimenting with colour. In viewing the painting at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, the graphically observed qualities of Freud's painting become evident. It is almost as if one could almost reach out and touch the motif, not so much in the sense of painted realism but nevertheless the sensation of warm flesh is overwhelmingly convincingly painted.

In Plate 5.3.4 Lucian Freud, *After Cezanne*, the evidence of the oil traces reveals that Freud is now painting when his calligraphic memory in rendering paint traces is at its highest peak. It is as though every new trace is an addition of something that had already been learned from *a priori* painting or, as Cezanne (1905) stated to Roger Marx,

> 'To my mind one does not put oneself in the past; one only adds a new link'. (cited by Feaver, 2003 - 47)

Cézanne is correct as that is the goal of calligraphic vision throughout painting's history. Unfortunately not all artists are sufficiently capable or honest to admit how hard that is to achieve, and here many pander to a contracted style of mark making instead of expanding it to see what might happen within an image as Freud has achieved in Plate 5.3.5, especially with the rupture to the rectangle of the canvas through adding a smaller rectangle to the upper left hand corner; this addition to the canvas would no doubt tend to alter the background mark making but, within this image, he has accommodated the fracture competently.

5.3.6 Evidence of trajectory in strength and precision of visual statement

Freud seemed to be aware of what he wanted out of painting from a very early stage of his career and that was to be forensic within his painterly vision from the chosen motif as he elaborates here:

> 'I didn't feel I had no ability, but I felt that the only way I could work properly was using the absolute maximum observation and maximum concentration...I thought that by starring at my subject matter and examining it more closely I could get something from it that would nourish my work'. (cited by Feaver,1992: 12)

Freud's developing system of painterly calligraphic vision which derived from continually painting directly from the motif made him develop conceptually, after assessment of his artwork that extended his current understandings in painting. This is verified by his statement in the Catalogue from the National Gallery of London, 1987; *The Artist Eye: Lucian Freud; What do I ask of painting?* I ask it to astonish, disturb, seduce, convince. This extension of his early theoretical statements reveals a consistency not only in the progression of his painting but also in his theoretical

understandings from his own praxis. For it seems natural that an artist such as Freud, who was and still is strategically examining the motif, paints through sheer will as an artist as if he were going to start to paint areas within the subject matter far more forensically. It was also likely that this, in turn, would outstrip the normal human glance in terms of what could be seen in just looking at the motif, that it had the potential to astonish, disturb, seduce and convince the audience of his theoretical painterly concerns.

5.3.7 Work emanates immediacy of vision sensation

Freud's painting career has been mostly an activity of painting directly from the front of the motif, especially in the later part of his career. This, in turn, has allowed Freud to paint with an immediacy of vision and none more publicly than his portrait of the Queen of England Elizabeth the Second (See Plate 5.3.2 Portrait of The Queen, 2001). It is probably one of his better portrait images achieved after a lifetime of direct praxis through painting in front of the motif. There is the painting of hair in various tones of off white, light grey, highlights of snow whites from the refracting of lights around the sitter, with very dark paynes greys as he experienced the visual

sensation in the deepest part of the hair's curls but elegantly swept under and around the crown,

This he has captured in paint with a calligraphic vision and then the flesh traces of paint are brushed/dragged downwards and around the facial muscles of the forehead and cheeks, These are in a range of light naples yellows, yellow ochres, burnt sienna reds, peachy light orange makeup and light yellow reddish hues in various oil traces and lengths, thus accurately describing his sensation of what has been observed.

There have been periods in Freud's career as a painter when he has painted away from the motif but mostly his sensations revealed in oil traces on canvas have been in direct engagement with the model. Therefore his painting is that of an artist who paints the immediate sensation and, in painting this throughout his life, he has learned from nature and this has taught him to extend his calligraphic vision.

But as Freud is aging it will be interesting to see if the calligraphic vision continues to be extended with the energy he has spent achieving it throughout a lifetime of painting. One fears that there are signs within his late *oeuvre* that the intentionality of

the mind and the ability of the body are no longer in sync as seen in the very late artworks with their lack of fluency in the brush work.

In Freud's late painting of *Naked Portrait, 2004 - 05* there is in the face of the model, a kind of fuzziness of paint, more than likely this can be attributed to the reworking of the image but it presents a sensation of being unsure, even though it's still well painted, the dexterity of the artist to control the paint from memory onto the canvas with his priori ability is not there, age has wilted the power in achieving his former sensibility in painting.

5.4 Synthesis and Current Influences

As the current praxis to theory in painting developed there needed to be some sort of contemporary guide and this was sought through the artworks of Morandi and Freud. Morandi was important through the way he resolved his own painterly calligraphic vision using motifs that contained still life. Morandi developed a system to articulate his theories in painting through accumulating an ever increasing store house of idiosyncratic paint marks. This was not only a revelation but enormously helpful in making one's own journey easier.

The determination of Morandi, even in what one might call a delayed progression, created a kind of resting place for one's owns praxis, meaning that not all things in a system of painting come swiftly. Realisations gleaned from the calligraphic vision come in their own time and this is a necessary trait to hold on to as a painter, for the demands of painting outwards to an unseen horizon line create a mirage that is never quite reached and this is frustratingly hard. A cool temperament is part of the painter's praxis in image making as Morandi as shown.

Freud, on the other hand, presented a slavish objective observation within his artworks and his paint traces tend to be mimetic of his eye which continually roves over the figurative motif while his remembrances are then translated into an idiosyncratic painterly vision.

In observing Freud's praxis within his paint traces observed from contemporary motives along with the myriad associated nuances of hues, it gave a sense of immediate instruction, allowing one to glean knowledge to be taken into contemporary praxis. Freud's paintings are like guides or markers of a common and diversified journey in figurative painting and very useful at that.

Chapter 6 The Development of a Praxis

6.1 Pre research Praxis 1975 - 1996

Idiosyncratic calligraphic systems in painting do not just happen. They occur through a personal journey of realisations from sighting what has occurred on the canvas during painting. Hence, after leaving high school in 1975, then working in a bank as a data processor and encountering the tedium of life in clerical monotony, the high school desire of becoming an artist became a reality in 1979 through a part time course in painting and drawing at a technical college over several years.

The most vivid remembrances of painting at the technical college were being taught traditional artistic techniques of form, tone and perspective. For instance, there was a square white, wooden rectangular box placed in the middle of the room. Upon that there was a large cone, a ball and the standard illumination through light placed to one side. The strategic placement of the lamp accentuated the light and shadows on the shapes. The lesson went on for weeks, with the lecturer walking round correcting the drawing. This seemed very much a drawing straightjacket from which it was difficult to free oneself and, in any case, an attempt to do so would be frowned upon.

This acquired technical training is illustrated in the painting of *Barrack St* (Davidson, 1980) (Plate 6.1.1) and had more to do with the image of a landscape that could be aesthetically measured. The idea underpinning the painting's style was based on the French impressionist attitude of image without knowing very much about the theory and how that was presented in the paint traces; nonetheless it seemed a good learning curve to start with in painting.

Plate 6.1.1 *Barrack St*, 1980 oil on canvas, 46 cm h x 36 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -), Collection of the Artist

Subsequently in 1982, enrolment at the Claremont School of Art eventuated but really produced nothing new in terms of a painted vision (memory). Claremont School of Art, although unique, really did not have the scholarly input necessary in schools of art. One only realises the difference in art education with hindsight, and the importance of such facilitation is not actually understood as a young student

when all things appear to be exciting and new. Therefore such informative input tends to help not only the staff at an institution but also guide students into finding their own personal synthesis in the fine arts and thus lead both towards their own calligraphic idiosyncratic vision. Thus in turn helps to push the boundaries outwards from the contractual dictates of technical competencies that seem to be valorised in the passage to become an artist. Claremont Art School at that particular time seemed to be about style, about drawing or painting in a particular way from what was seen on the motif. The achievement of this style required significant technical competencies and artistic image making devices as representative of one's synthesis of vision as an artist.

The exercises in technical competency seemed very much the same, with the emphasis upon achieving an image or mark, either in topographical representation, subjectively or narratively, from a motif. Once having acquired the control of a technique, the appropriate examination mark would be given. It might be argued that the concept of measuring drawing in terms of accuracy is quite ludicrous because any judgement of drawing accuracy is always going to be arbitrary. Cézanne demonstrated that in the Mount Saint Victorie paintings, with several lines running down the side of the top of mountain where he was searching for the edge; the

drawing was less about accuracy and more about his sensation/memory. Yet because of a rigid tradition in visual perception, comprising form, tone and perspective, a kind of collective apogee of good drawing ability was historically in place, and celebrated by the state supported art schools of the time.

The influence of the school of art, including George Haynes (1938) – who studied at The Chelsea School of Art, can be seen in a charcoal drawing of my backyard (Plate 6.1.2). As a young art student, Haynes was influential on one's memory and, in retrospect, this was beneficial for, if nothing else, his idea in drawing at least allowed the eye to search out, in a kind of forensic way, the nuances of light and shade within the chosen motif as exemplified in Plate 6.1.2.

For instance, in Plate 6.1.2 there is a range of subtle charcoal greys representing the light on the asbestos fence. There are further nuances of light cerulean bluish greys drawn in variety of short right to left slantwise marks that represent the shadows of the clothes on the windblown grass.

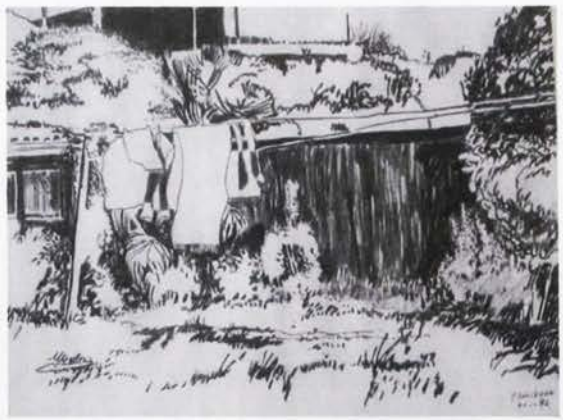

Plate 6.1.2 *My Backyard,* 1986 charcoal on paper, 52 cm h x 38 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -), Collection of the Artist

But in some ways Haynes appears to represent what was symptomatic in Western Australian art schools, being a contraction to insulated and comfortable idea with one's artistic praxis, which encompasses realization towards not only theory but the calligraphic vision in traces to articulate it. These sentiments are not necessarily uncommon but uttered before as stated here:

> In his comments on the first Festival of Perth, Max Harris observed that the people of Perth were insulated rather than, as commonly believed, isolated art elsewhere. (Bromfield, 2008:14)

This insulation as Harris had mentioned appears to be evidenced within the stagnated looking praxis of Haynes in Plates 6.1.3 and 6.1.4 with a eighteen year time span between the execution of the two paintings.

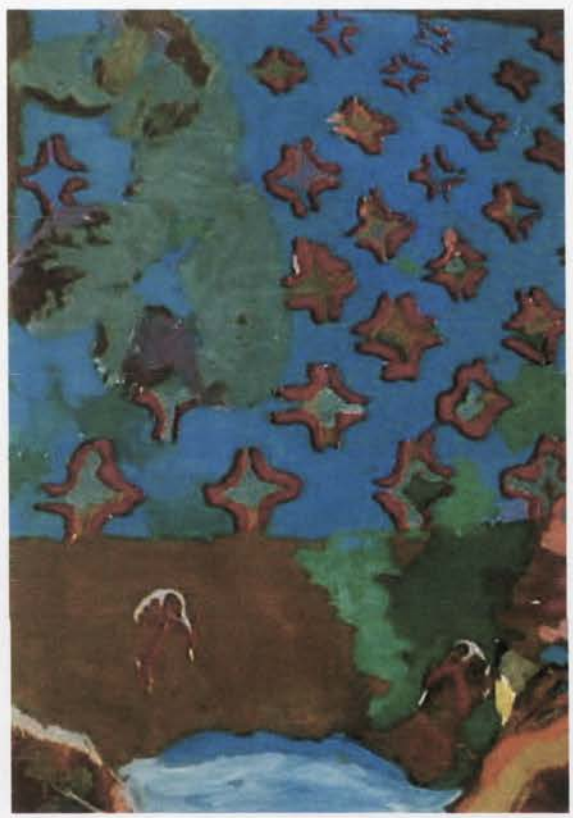

Plate 6.1.3 Self Portrait/model 1967, oil on canvas, no dimensions given by George Haynes (1938 -) *George Haynes: Three Decades of Painting*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth

Plate 6.1.4 *Gitane 1983,* oil on canvas, no dimensions given by George Haynes (1938 -) *George Haynes: Three Decades of Painting*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth

It might be argued that the arrival of Haynes from the London art schools to Western Australia, and the undertaking of the drawing methodologies that he imparted to his students, seems to have been little different from those facilitated by Coldstream at the London Slade School of Art at the same time. Which means that a particular aesthetic insulation was transferred from one school of learning to another, raising the issue of being careful who one chooses to learn from in art.

In an interview with Professor Neville Weston, Edith Cowan University, School of Visual Art (very much a devotee and clone of the Coldstream paradigm) he observed that.

> British art education emphasized the documentary style of drawing. English art had tended to be narrative anyway based on life room, still life, pictorial composition that lasted from the 1940 - 1960. (Weston, June 6 1998, personal communication)

In retrospect Claremont School of Art had enormous potential but, given the obvious lack of a scholar within the institution, there was little mechanism to promote thinking or critical debate amongst lecturers or students about what constitutes fine art. Hence the innovative idiosyncratic vision was limited to the exhibitions that took place with that school and this was disappointing.

After leaving Claremont School of Art to enrol in the Western Australian College of Advanced Education (now Edith Cowan University) in a Visual Arts undergraduate degree, there was the introduction to the paintings of William Coldstream (by the then Head of School Gareth Morse (Plate 6.1.5) through a catalogue for an exhibition

at the Tate Gallery in London called *The Hard Won Image,* (Tate Gallery 1984, see Plates 6.1.6 - 7) and this was pivotal to my career as an artist in terms of theory because, although Coldstream's contractual praxis was seductive, his theory was flawed and, in tracing his painting methodology, it allowed my own synthesis to reveal itself in painting, this being the sensation of colour of time as painted from the motif.

Plate 6.1.5 *Sons of Gwalia Hotel*, conti, pencil on paper,
15 cm h x 43 cm w by Gareth Morse,
Collection of Peter Davidson

Morse presented a more informative position on British documentary drawing with his forensic explanation of the edge seen on the motif, and placed accordingly on the paper as a line either with a common garden biro or HB pencil. All other measurements would be contractual to that point so the subject matter manifested itself as an image that pertained to some idea of visual documentary accuracy on paper.

This sight size and accurate drawing methodology, as it was called by Morse, allowed the motif to surrender itself slowly, in terms akin to television documentary, gradually release information to the viewer, as it focuses upon the subject matter, albeit in a formatted way.

The key issue realised from this methodology was that elaborated and taught to those who wished to learn from Morse. This was that the format was what it was, a format, and did not actually allow the artist to realise how the motif existed through time, illuminated by light and affected by weathers.

Morse too had been taught by Coldstream, albeit for just a short time, and adhered to this particular tradition for most of his life as seen in Plate 6.1.6.

Plate 6.1.6 *Reclining Nude 1974 - 6*, by William Coldstream (1906 – 86) oil on canvas, 101.6 cm h x 127 cm w, Gowing, L., 1990, The Paintings of William Coldstream, Remembering Coldstream, The Tate Gallery, London.

Plate 6.1.7 *Mrs Winifred Burger* 1936-7, by William Coldstream (1906 – 86), oil on canvas, 78 cm h x 54.6 cm w, Gowing, L., 1990, The Paintings of William Coldstream, Remembering Coldstream, The Tate Gallery, London.

Nonetheless Morse was crucial in my career as an artist for two reasons: first, the introduction to Coldstream and the other to the sight size and accurate methodology. Hence, in retrospect, one can be grateful for Morse's facilitation of the sight size and accurate drawing methodology for it is something that is used within the praxis today as seen in Plate 6.1.8.

Plate 6.1.8 *Trigg Beach House*, 2008, A4, pencil on paper by Peter Davidson (1958 -), Private Collection

Coldstream's methodology of painting, inasmuch as it adhered to the traditions of painting, was idiosyncratic (although this was not realised whilst an undergraduate student) for it tended to use some kind of highly charged sado masochistic painting methodology in the praxis - which he maintained passionately through his whole life. Even more intriguing was Coldstream's method of painting with these strange short crimson markings (see Plate 6.1.6) that, purposively for Coldstream, represented some kind of visual exactitude of anatomical measurement. His artwork tended to

rupture my artistic vision and this was a really seductive kind of engagement within one's student praxis but it was just frowned on by lecturers. What a pity that they did not let any student go with learning/ using the methodology and being there to guide them in a scholarly way to achieve their own synthesis of vision.

There was something about Coldstream that really resonated with me. It nagged and would not go away and, after originally enrolling in a Masters programme at ECU where the lecturers subsequently frowned upon a student's free enquiry, I left and went to study at the University of Western Australia with the same idea and was encouraged to do so.

It was not until enrolling in a Masters of Fine Art at the University of Western Australia in 1996 that the full impact of working under a first class scholar was realised. The shift in the dynamics of fine art education became apparent and, without the prejudice of saying you are simply copying Coldstream's style, the then Head of Department Dr David Bromfield said *go ahead paint in Coldstream's methodology and let's see what will happen.*

This statement by Dr David Bromfield was a relief because he had allowed a methodology in painting to be researched, even though he no doubt knew it was essentially birdsong image making but nonetheless he encouraged free inquiry into something that was, at the time, in its infancy as part of one's synthesis of painting, to happen.

In retrospect, undertaking masters research candidature at UWA was a stunning eye opener because there were no departments, just one long room, where all the students who were doing fine arts (performance, painting, drawing, installation, print making, film) had a table/work space, so one could talk to and see other student's praxis at any given time. This was a highly dynamic experience and most beneficial to the research at the time for one realised how interrelated the fine arts are in differing technologies of praxis.

For instance, listening to *avant garde* film artists in what they were doing in praxis illuminated many ideas in subject matter, and different ways of viewing the public surfaces of the external world objectively. For example, one artist might swing a camera around his head whilst filming, thus presenting imagery that challenged the established the traditions of film, through the rupture and tensions it caused in

viewing it. And more importantly it made one realise that the *avant garde* and good painting were not separate in attaining the highest quality of artistic praxis.

The benefits of Bromfield's visionary and scholarly input into one's fine art education were in stark contrast to the experience of continual negative statements about Coldstream's methodology which that were being made by some at Edith Cowan University. The vision at UWA which encouraged one to challenge orthodoxy is the essence of genuine research training.

Hence observing the light shifting across the picture plane in Plate 1.4.2 *Eggplant on green and yellow paper 1996* lead to the discovery of Object Painting and the realization that Coldstream's theoretical statement about his praxis and the artwork did not match up. This was a revelation, particularly that someone so informed within the British Fine Arts community seemed so uniformed in relation to his own painting. Nonetheless the discovery of Coldstream's painting set off a chain of events within my praxis that continues its influence it to this day as will be elaborated on in subsequent chapters.

6.2 The exhibition years between 1998 - 2002

The painting *oeuvre* from 1982 to 1996 had been a period of creating images from subjective and objective motifs but the praxis was little understood and this understanding of what actually makes critical painting was not grasped until the Masters research which allowed the praxis to reach a unique idea in painting. A focus on the painting period after the masters research will serve to show how this develops because it is there back in the studio and away from the dictates of academic study that inquiry resumed, energized by the knowledge that was gleaned the research

One painterly issue that was still nagging was the ongoing problem of surface qualities within the image and this is a crucial element in good painting, as realised from seeing the Cézanne exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales during the period of the research.

Living and painting in Western Australia compounded the problem of not having access to master artworks on a regular basis. Whether it was a result of the tyranny of distance or the lack of funds to the State Gallery didn't matter. What mattered was

that I needed access to such work and this was achieved in 1999 with a trip to the National Gallery of Victoria. This proved to be a critical input contributing to my learning curve. It revealed lifelong dedication as seen in the curator's attitude towards the artworks and it also revealed the calligraphic vision in paint traces as seen within the master artworks on show.

The exhibition on show at the time was Masterworks from the NGV collection curated by Sonia Dean, the Curator of International Art, and whom I had the pleasure of meeting. She was extremely humble and informative but at the time was fretting with great concern over one of the master artworks which had the canvas slightly vibrating from the air conditioning. It was not so much that there was any damage being done to the artwork (which I was assured there wasn't) but how it looked in relationship to the whole exhibition. I was surprised by this attention to detail by Dean because the show in itself was stunning with artworks ranging from Monet, Cezanne, Turner, Bacon, and El Greco etc...; it was what one was looking for in terms of how ideas in paint traces could be seen as master artworks.

In all the exhibitions I had seen so far in Australia this exhibition curated by Dean was a knockout through the sheer quality and quantity of artworks but what was also

astounding one that stood out just through its sheer size and human endeavour was the *The Banquet of Cleopatra: Giovanni Tiepolo 1696 - 1770*

For example, in gazing around *The Banquet of Cleopatra* there are so many interesting areas of painting to be examined, such as a piece of cloth, the dog or a human figure. like the dog in the front right hand side of the painting, the way the animal's coat is executed with thickish slantwise paint traces following the curvature of the beast's body and the dog's hair colour/tone being so wonderfully painted as if one is standing in front it in the *now.* Again take the dress worn by the European looking Cleopatra with the gradation of hues in her dress from the silver peaches of the highlights to the mid range yellow peach tones reflecting spaces where the eye has direct vision at the fullness of the dyes hue and then there are the burnt sienna peaches in the shadows; it's such an extravagant painting.

Another painting that immediately struck a chord within this exhibition is *Siesta, The Artists Studio c.1900 by Pierre Bonnard 1867 - 1847* and how the artist creates the sensation of flesh, happy, relaxed and sleeping in oil paint, with its opaque butter pork fat tones, the crimson hues caused by the weight of the body when lying and the purple grey tones of colder areas of the human form are really inspiring, especially

the density of paint that sits on the surface of the canvas that resonates that sensation; it's an amazingly hard sensation to paint. Then there is Bonnard's application of paint traces creating the peaceful charm of the woman on the bed with the dog dozing on the floor. Nothing seems to be an intrusion not even the viewer for all cares in the world have ceased.

In seeing these aforementioned artworks and realising the quality of the paint traces, there was a concomitant realization that one's own current painting praxis had some considerable distance to travel in order to develop and system of image making to achieve something even slightly comparable to these artworks. This was daunting to say the least, and in some ways, extremely disheartening because, after nearly eighteen years of painting, the journey looked far more arduous than ever before. It left one with the prospect of much more travel to see the further master artworks but it did have a significant effect on the system of painting because, what was realised from the master artworks in paint qualities and subsequent research into their systems, became a crucial turning point leading to a shifting of the praxis.

In 2000 an exhibition titled: *The Strangeness of Natural Vision* was based on research begun in the master's programme was held at the Perth Galleries, Western

Australia. Here was an attempt to paint one's own idiosyncratic time based idea on a three large panels that were approximately three metres wide and two metres high.

The idea of creating different sensation of time (as was discovered in Object Painting which derived from Monet's Water Lilies series) was the driving force behind the project and, even though there had been access to master artworks as seen at the NGV, the system to develop the paint traces was still raw and unrefined. In retrospect, inasmuch as the idea was innovative, the paint traces were nowhere near what one really desired as the felt sensations were still not being achieved and this was again disappointing.

The critical response to the paintings produced during this period was about the surface qualities. The idea was original but the paint quality within the artworks was laboured, heavy and lacked animation towards the idea. This was a problem that had to be resolved through research into the system of creating paint traces as it was likely that the solution existed in viewing master artworks.

There seemed at the time little hope that this was ever going to be solved quickly and the prospect of living in Western Australian, with little chance of seeing master

artworks on a regular basis was a bleak one because there is no doubt that access to such artwork was a necessity.

Consequently the prospect of the painting moving to a point of interest in terms of surface qualities was looking dire, and the solution was likely to be costly in terms of travelling to research master artworks at interstate galleries. Yet it is this research into master artworks that leads one to understand the calligraphic vision evidenced within these artworks.

6.3 The Calligraphic Vision

The current thrust of my painting research has been to keep the praxis as objective as possible so the calligraphic vision can develop optimally because, to add subjective or narrative content, would mean adding another layer of research about the motif. Keeping the motif as purely objective as possible will allow the praxis to concentrate on painting what visual information is being received from the motif and then be painted with immediacy on to canvas.

In painting from the artist's storehouse of memory, there is nonetheless always going to be influence on vision, no matter how small or great, from the subjective or narrative memories that reveal themselves on canvas. Acceptance of such influence on memory whilst painting is a normal condition of imaging making, and may well prove to be ideal for rendering the calligraphic vision.

Philosophers have questioned pure objectivity, as they should, because almost nothing is pure on this earth. The best one could hope for in painting towards an objective calligraphic vision is a measure between the desire for something pure and what actually exists in visual recognition in the fractional millisecond (now) then painted through delay (thought and action), and exhibiting itself as scientific proof. For instance, Monet's *Haystack* paintings of his objective vision (memory) rendering of a moment of light around the Haystack (the aura) and how that is now known as a impression of a moment in vision became manifest with the influence of delay. On the face of what has been said about Monet's painting, representing a moment of light in time with the influence of delay, sounds theoretically ironic but it is factual; thus revealing that, in Monet's praxis, his motifs were arranged to give the clearest and must unobstructed visual path towards his concepts in painting, thus giving his imagery an idiosyncratic calligraphic vision.

Likewise, in this current research towards my idiosyncratic calligraphic vision, in painting each moment of remembrance of light as recognised on the public surfaces of the motif, the *now* will be evidenced in each trace of painting on the canvas. Obstructions from memory through the influence of delay may well exist in the research praxis. How much impact this will have is currently unknown although one can only hope it will amount to the most liminal impact, almost undetectable within each trace. No doubt it will exist but, like Monet, the calligraphic idiosyncratic vision will reveal itself in the objectively painted traces.

Chapter 7 Methodology

7.1 Experimentation with the Calligraphic Vision

The parameters of the calligraphic vision, both in terms of artistic masters and personal trajectory, have been discussed throughout the previous chapters. This chapter details how, in the current research, the experimental process towards the objective idiosyncratic image was designed.

7.2 Site selection

The extant experimentation towards the objective idiosyncratic image identified earlier encompasses, among others, primarily Hokusai (Japan), Monet (France), and Davidson Japan). The first two are northern hemisphere countries while Australia represents the southern hemisphere. If the experimentation is to encompass both hemispheres, Australia and one other country should constitute sites because it is necessary that the research be taken out of the comfort zone of familiarity. This is essential to prevent the system of painting stagnating. If the motifs are new, along with the subsequent alien hues as sighted on the motif, then the focus of the research articulating such colours onto the canvas will be marginalised. Given the decision to

include one northern and one southern hemisphere country, since both Japan and Australia inhabit the Asia Pacific region, these are appropriate focus sites. Japan has the added advantage of total unfamiliarity; the researcher has no prior experience in the terrain so this will no doubt enhance the focus of painting. This ensures that there will be unfamiliar and familiar motifs plus create a comparison within research images.

7.3 The importance of time and delay

Since this research involves experimentation into the *modus operandi* of the painter's objective visual encounter with the external world, it is essential to see how the calligraphic vision develops over an extended period of painting from the initial engagement and experimentation with the motif to the desired surety of vision exhibited through paint traces on the canvas. In order to accommodate both time and delay as integral to this process it is important to choose motifs which will maximize this process.

7.4 Selection of the motifs

Given the centrality of the focus on time and delay it is important to choose motifs which are not distracting in terms of either subjective or narrative content. For example, certain landscapes and/or objects may have high valence because they have an embedded personal narrative or the site has strong personal memories. In addition, given multiple sites, it is important that the motifs accommodate these within a single experimental frame. Table 7.4.1 details the criteria with in this frame.

Table 7.4.1 Criteria for the Motifs

Criteria for the Motifs	What is required
Accessibility	Able to be accessed at all times
Convenience	Ease of access regardless of time of day
Cost	Nil or minimal
Subject to change light and weathers	Offering a range from extreme to nil effect
Variable familiarity	Familiarity with of the object will vary from high to low
Interest	Must have engagement potential for the artist.
Narrative content	Nil or minimal
Subjective impact	Nil or minimal

Table 7.4.2 shows these criteria applied to potential motifs in the Australian context.

Table 7.4.2

Potentiality of the Motifs - Australia

Potential Motifs	Access-Ability	Convenience	Cost	Change Ability	Familiarity	Interest
Palm Tree	Located Near studio	High	Nil	Possible to many changes due to light weather	High	High
Teapot	Located near studio	High	Nil	Minimum	High	High
Trigg Seascape	Across Road from studio	High/medium	Nil	Light and Weather	High	Medium Low
Nude	Limited	Low	High	Low	Medium/	Low
Model Glass bottle and Ball with Mirrors	Located in studio	High	Nil	Low	Low High	High

It is clear from Table 7.4.2 that certain motifs are not suitable while others self select, namely the palm tree, teapot, glass bottle and ball with mirrors.

As indicated in Table 7.4.2 interest in the Trigg Seascape *was low to moderate* and this was thus a crucial factor in not wanting to paint in the local terrain as it is important to be very driven by visual interest in rendering the objective idiosyncratic

vision. A motif was needed that would maintain a sustained focus for some time and the Trigg Seascape did not do that. Moreover Table 7.4.2 (Familiarity) reveals the *high* level of subjective memories *given* considerable subjective and narrative memories (resonating from childhood and teenage years spent surfing in that terrain), traits of memory which are not conductive to painting the terrain objectively.

As shown in Table 7.4.2 Potentiality of the Motif, interest was *high* for the undraped nude model. A nude model was an ideal choice because the figure is of such complex design and living. No doubt such a model would present continuing shifts of light through time upon its public surfaces through changing light and the dynamics of the form. While degree of interest as shown was *high*, the *costs* would be *high* and accessibility *low* thus rendering this motif less than optimal for the current research.

On the other hand, the Palm Tree has high *familiarity* because it resonates something in one's life that is very familiar and then one day the realization dawns upon one's consciousness that yet there is very little known about that motif. In this research it is considered to be ideal that the subject matter to be painted contains as little inherent emotional content as possible because it distracts from the realization of the research aims.

Similarly The Teapot maintains the same detached familiarity as the Palm Tree. It has been part of the studio for a long period, a motif painted several times although it has never been used for what it was created to do, that is to brew tea. As a result the teapot has no sentimental attachments and its colour makes ideal objective subject matter to paint for the research.

While the Glass Bottle and Ball with Mirror have been used as motifs previously, they do not have any sentimental attachment. They will be included in this research, however, primarily because of the high degree of objective difficulty in painting such motifs through time in controlled conditions in the studio.

Table 7.4.3 applies the criteria presented in Table 7.4.1 to motifs in the Japanese context.

Table 7.4.3

Potentiality of the Motifs - Japan

Potential Motifs	Access-Ability	Convenience	Cost	Change Ability	Familiarity	Interest
Ikawa Valley	Limited Periods	Medium	High	Very high Seasonal	Reasonable	Very high
Kobe Mountains	Limited Periods	Medium	High	Very high Seasonal	Reasonable	Low to Medium
Urban Kobe	All Periods	Medium	High	moderate	Reasonable	Low to medium

By contrast with Australia, the only accessible Japanese motif, which also met the other criteria, was the Ikawa Valley. As a potential motif it evolved from a series of walks from the residence in a visit at Gaukentoshi, Kobe not long after first contact with Japan. In Table 7.4.3 the Ikawa Valley, Japan the criteria ***Interest*** yields the word *high* in relationship to this particular terrain. Nothing in my painting career matched the sensations encountered in the Ikawa Valley during the Japanese winter, especially coming from a rather extreme summer Perth temperature of above thirty degrees Celsius on a daily basis for over the previous five weeks.

The first and foremost sensation was that of the cold and then, on my travels around Osaka-Kobe, the unbelievable infrastructure. Very little in life so far had or could have prepared me for the formidable sensations of overwhelming concrete designs juxtaposed against the Japanese landscape. It was not so much that such infrastructure does not exist in Australia through enclaves of designed city planning but, in Japan, it just seems to be in the most unusual places. Such concrete randomness of building, bridges and flats against the rice paddies, market gardens and natural landscape constitutes a bewildering affront to the trained Australian aesthetic deriving from a country with beautiful space and little history of city planning such as Australia.

The alien sensations emanating from an unrelenting myriad of modern infrastructure juxtaposed against the backdrop of the ancient civilization of Japan were matched only by the hue and tone of weather and light that manifested itself on the public surfaces of an artificial natural landscape. An example is flying into Kansai from Australia where the vegetation in summer, apart from the evergreen eucalyptus trees, is a golden dead brown. Australia does have an intermittent flourish of English watered gardens within the urban terrain of the major cities, which lie hundreds or thousands of miles apart across the continent as a consequence of its colonial past. In

Kobe the concrete was dark grey, and prussian, black, blue bridges seemed to have a stain of continual moisture attached to them. The vegetation on the hillside was an array of some permanent leafed trees, bamboo and contrasting deciduous trees.

The rice paddies situated along the Ikawa River were brown, grey and yellow ochre, not high in hue but the kind of soggy colour of very wet materials that have sat in moisture for too long. The tones of the day bellowed and brightened each time the winter sunlight broke through the clouds and touched the ground. Not being used to these colours or tones throughout my painting life, it was like landing on Mars.

7.5 The experimental time frame

Table 7.5.1 shows the planned time frames within which each motif will be painted. The rendering of the motifs will be through a developing system of painting directly from the subject matter and through delayed vision (memory).

Table 7.5.1

Time and conditions of painting the motif

Time	Conditions
Morning 6am - 11 am	Mild to good conditions of weather and temperatures
Midday 11am – 1pm	Poor to good conditions of weather, plus mildly hot or cold temperatures
Afternoon 1pm 5 pm	Poor to mild weather conditions and mildly hot to cold temperatures
Evening 5pm - 7 pm	Mild weather or temperatures
Night time 7pm – 1pm	Mild to good weather and cold or mildly hot temperatures

As evidenced in Table 7.5.1, motifs will be painted as much as possible through all weathers (rainy, foggy, cloudy, sunny) and time (morning, noon, evening night) in accordance with the criterion *changeability* (Table 7.4.2) to ascertain the extent to which the painted image can encapsulated within time. The only way to realise how time and weather interact is to set up an experimental situation with each motif to accommodate as much sensation as possible within the onset of delays.

The aesthetic dimension of the portrayed imagery will be personally calibrated rather than contracted to the traditions of aesthetic like form, tone and perspective given that painting through time cannot be subject to such controls. Object Painting has revealed that the *a priori* history of aesthetic controls in painting, are useless as a measure for this research and thus will not be used within this study in that context. Therefore there will be a series of nine by five series of paintings, rendered in two different methods, to make comparisons between tradition and innovation in image making.

7.6 Expansion of motifs

While the methodology as planned was implemented, it was extended to incorporate other motifs as Japan opened up unanticipated visual choices. This was necessary because, given the input from international exhibitions and the challenges inherent in a new and different landscape, the painting gathered pace towards original and calligraphic vision. Both original and additional motifs are presented in Table 7.6.1. The additional motifs are in italics. In each case the chapter in which the painting process is discussed is indicated in the final column.

Table 7.6.1

Expanded list of Motifs

Motifs	**Australia**	**Chapter**	**Japan**	**Chapter**
Still life	• Yellow teapot • Bottle, ball with Mirror	9.2 10.2	• *Japan Teapot* • *The Aquarium* • *Red Pear* • *Flower*	9.4 &9.5 12.1 12.2 12.3
Landscape	• Palm Tree	10.1	• *Ikawa Studies* • *Minami Blue House* • *Sieshen Minami Valley* • *Minami Farm House* • *Minami Rice Paddies* • *Minami Sienna House* • *Japanese Farm House* • *Japanese Bridge* • *Cherry Blossom*	8.2,8.3, 8.4 13.1 13.2 13.3 13.4 13.5 11.1 11.2 11.3

Chapter 8 The Drawing Praxis and Ikawa Painting Studies

8.1 Implementation

As indicated in 7.6, the research plan was implemented as stated but mitigating factors that were not foreseen often intervened, especially the weather in Japan with its extremes of heat and cold, along with intermittent typhoons, that no doubt dramatically altered the praxis at times although not necessarily the results of the research towards the idiosyncratic calligraphic vision in painting; in some ways unforeseen interruptions were to enhance the study.

In the following descriptions of the praxis, digital photographs will be used to illustrate both the motif and the resultant artworks. In each case the quotations from the artist's notes produced each day are italicized to distinguish them from the main text.

8.2 Drawing Japan

The drawing praxis in Japan continued through differing seasons, weathers and times of the day/night in line with the idea of painting through time (Table 7.5.1). The English sight size and accurate drawing tradition was the methodology used, not towards any performative outcome in collective aesthetic measures but because, as a drawing system, it allows *delay* to be exaggerated in front of the motif, so the vision acquired had as much sense data from the motion of light as possible to be painted in Japan. Plates 8.2.1 and 8.2.2 demonstrate this.

Plate 8.2.1 *Ikawa Dani*, 2004, pencil/watercolour on paper, approximate size A4 by Peter Davidson, private collection

The drawing is from a hill overlooking the Ikawa Valley, towards Sieshen Minami in the Japanese mid spring. In the process of drawing this image the light changed dramatically across the picture plane but even more frustratingly the taught traditions of drawn accuracy failed through delay

not only in the shifting light but the way one's vision constantly moves against the terrain.

Plate 8.2.2 Ikawa Dani 2004, pencil on paper, approximately A4 size paper, by Peter Davidson (1958 -), collection of the artist

Spring in Japan is not cold until nightfall but the memories of the immediately prior winter are still strong with memories of the bitter cold. Those recollections of that bleak winter were etched into memory as there had been no experience like that before. Once, however, the new green starts to reveal itself through the local vegetation in the terrain, the range of greens is quite phenomenal. If one has painted in an Australia for most of one's life, Japan is certainly is the one of the most unusual objective sensations encountered so far.

In drawing with sight size technique it has now been turned into a system of articulating the sense data from public surfaces with the picture plane. This happens with the influence of delay through time, what is revealed though is totally unexpected in the sense it opens up the recognition of time with the motif so what is drawn onto the paper at times is unexpected but factual for the moment of vision. For instance, when two buildings are sighted, the one in the foreground, edges shift, in relationship to my visual flux, therefore at times, making the decision to draw the line representing the edge of the object are always somewhat arbitrary.

As the defined system in drawing refines itself through each drawn image, it not only plays an integral role in revealing how time and light reveal themselves within the landscape but reinforces those memories that will be used in painting from delay, once praxis in the studio recommences in Perth.

Drawing in this manner is important to painting time for it allows vision to infiltrate the picture plane thus revealing what is happening as the motion of light acts over the artist's picture plane, thus allowing the remembrances of the nuances in light to be ingrained into one's memory. Hence, when recalled from memory into painted

sensation, it may tends to be very well remembered and placed onto the canvas accordingly rather than as some vague sensation. So drawing then, instead of being separate, becomes an extension of one's painterly system because of how it heightens the sensations received from the motif; thus, when recalled in delay in painting, the memories of motif are thus more strongly.

For example, in Plate 8.2.2 there is no colour only linear lead traces that are drawn responses to where the edges of objects have been sighted within the motif, albeit as arbitrary traces due to one's flux against the motif as evidenced in the roof of the house in the upper left hand corner of the plate, where two points are indicated with lead traces and the lines drawn slantwise downwards. This represents two differing points of recognition from the same spot within the picture plane but due to one's natural visual natural flux through time and space, two points with associated lines were drawn.

But nonetheless this slow process of drawn sense helps data accumulate sensations within one's storehouse of memory, which will no doubt manifest itself through delay in the praxis painting system.

8.3 The Ikawa Landscape

These nine by five inch boards will be painted on acrylics and in front of the motifs. The idea for the works derived from a dialogue with praxis supervisor Professor Silver, in which conversation it was decided to create two paintings. One was to be in the traditional idea of landscape of one moment in time with all the technical painting traditions of form, tone and shadow as accurately in the contractual methodology and the other was to represent the idea of painting the motion of light through time. Therefore one panel would record the historical traditions of painting and the other the new prototype in relationship to the aims.

Small wooden panels (22 cm h x 13.5 cm w) were used to paint these images which were painted alongside each other on location with each panel painted according to the requirements of the discussed idea. As the need arose, swapping between research painting methods happened more or less randomly on site. From Plates 8.3.1 – 8.3.11 the observed elements of nature's public surfaces will be discussed in relationship to the photographic plates. Plates of the subsequent paintings thereafter will exhibit the painterly praxis from on site locations within the Ikawa Valley. In

Plate 8.3.1 the first motif of the research is recorded photographically in the morning at the Ikawa Valley.

Plate 8.3.1 *Ikawa Valley*, 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

It is hot and the sky is a hazy blue it reminds me very much of the early warm Australian summer but it is sensationally green; it's a very weird sensation coming from Perth. For Perth in early summer, being normally of yellow ochre and brown hues in the bushland grasses with intermittent green trees and shrubbery, presents a very different visual experience to what is being seen now.

Plate 8.3.2 reveals one moment of the effect from the midday sun on the motif

Plate 8.3.2 *Ikawa Valley*, 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The bridge has been a very traditional motif within the Japanese history of image making, especially in Ukiyo-e wood block prints. For example; Ando Hiroshige's 1797 – 1858 print titled Shower on the Ohashi Bridge near Ataka and this particular image was the motif in Vincent Van Gogh's painting in 1887 from the original print. The bridge in the Ikawa valley may not be a famous bridge but it certainly entertained one's vision.

Plate 8.3.3 demonstrates the system of painting that will be used in the Ikawa Valley painting studies.

Plate 8.3.3 *Acrylic painting palette, Ikawa Valley* 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

In Plate 8.3.4 there is the effect of sunlight through dense pollution.

Plate 8.3.4 Ikawa Valley, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

This particular series of painting in the Ikawa Valley has begun and at the moment there are the markings of the Coldstream measured exactitude methodology on the white primed wooded canvas.

There is a weft of cotton gauze tones something akin to looking through thin cotton gauze into the landscape in the distance. In some ways it reminds one of Monet's

paintings of foggy days on the Seine. Plates 8.3.5 and 8.3.6 reveal how, during time, the atmospheric haze shifts in density.

Plate 8.3.5 *Ikawa Valley* 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

It has been another hot day, the acrylic paints are drying extremely fast in the heat, one is not sure why this particular terrain is so smoggy or smoky but it certainly affects the light that reveals itself on the object's public surfaces within the valley.

Plate 8.3.6 *Ikawa Valley* 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

It is late in the afternoon in the Ikawa Valley and the hues have become slightly more opaque; why this is occurring must be due to the enormous quantities of burning off around the rice paddies of Japan.

Plate 8.3.7 reveals the influence on the Ikawa landscape.

Plate 8.3.7 *Ikawa Valley* 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

For some reason the day is clearer, one can see into the distance with far greater clarity, this may not seem much to people in Australia but the haze here is really phenomenally dense at times, so it is a relief to see a clear day.

It is hard to imagine how polluted it gets here on a regular basis, coming from Perth where industry is minimal, with clear blue skies; hence to paint here presents a very different visual sensation.

This shortening of visual distance through smoke is designed to create an atmosphere of someone trying to sight the landscape through a piece of thick gauze, a very strange sensation. One finds the traditions of painting clarity and what is actually happening in front of you somewhat difficult to reconcile visually.

Plates 8.3.8 and 8.3.9 exhibit the weft of smog that at times floats thought the terrain in various densities.

Plate 8.3.8 *Ikawa Valley*, 2004 digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The typhoon's influence has made the colours of the landscape far more vivid. This replaces the smoggy bluish grey hues of the previous days.

Plate 8.3.9 *Ikawa Valley*, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Over the last few days there has been a typhoon and there has been too much rain to be conducive to painting outdoors, actually near impossible because the moisture in the air seems to generate a constant fine mist which makes the paint marks on board constantly prone to slippage thus altering the original sensation. Plate 8.3.10 exhibits the effect of a typhoon.

Plate 8.3.10 *Ikawa Valley* 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

To compare Plate 8.3.10 with other preceding plates representing previous days is truly amazing, due to the atmosphere being so clear. The blues in the sky are far more vivid and this is going to have a profound effect on the images that have been painted through time because there are going to be some areas of the painting that look extremely hazy and others where the blue manifests in brilliant hues.

These differing hues from the sighted weft can be seen in the photographs of the praxis on the following five pages through the days. The phenomenon of the typhoon and its associated influence on the hues of atmosphere has created an interesting dilemma in painting, primarily related to the clarity of the motif at a distance increased through time.

8.4 Stages in Process: Ikawa Studies

In the sections which follow, each painting study will be explored separately through digital photographs, quotations from the artist's notes and reflective research commentary.

8.4.1 Ikawa Study

Plate 8.4.1 exhibits the first day's attempts in painting the bridge in the Ikawa Valley.

Plate 8.4.1 *Painting study,* 2004, acrylic on board, 12.5cm h x 22.5cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

This is about the tradition of painting one static moment. It has been painted around 1-30 pm in the afternoon in the Ikawa valley.

As the size of the board is smallish, much can be accomplished in rendering the light on the motif as it changes in front of you.

Plate 8.4.2 *Painting study*, 2004, acrylic on board, 12.5cm h x 22.5cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Within this there is of the same motif as [Plate 8.3.1] *but this is dealing with motion of light as it interplays with the landscape.*

While the painting system of using acrylics and retarder medium with soft hair brushes may well not be the most suitable medium for painting outdoors, oils currently are not an option in Japan for the apartment, although consistent with the size of Japanese apartments, is to small. Painting within such small spaces creates problems as the fumes from the oils and purified turps would be overwhelming, not only for the artist but others in surrounding apartments.

One can take comfort from the fact that the new system of painting is working adequately in Japan. That is, it has achieved the desired results thus far in that both the time based and traditional methodologies of rendering the landscape exhibit those traces reasonably accurately. This means how the paint is mixed and placed onto the wooden primed boards with the soft haired brush prove to be very succinct to the desired sensation from memory. For instance, in Plate 8.4.3 there are within the foliage, traces of various shades of greenish Prussian blue hues, which are placed slantwise in accordance with what was recognised at the time within the picture plane; these paint marks sit competently on the board due to the nature of a developing system of painting.

The weft of hue from the smoke haze makes sighted objects within the picture plane seem more distant than they actually are, thus making much of the distant landscape contain an opacity of light bluish greys and green, brownish hues. These acts of man in the landscape were not planned but create a really interesting effect in painting that happens in the praxis.

Plate 8.4.3 *Painting study,* 2004, acrylic on board, 12.5 cm h x 22.5 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Another typhoon is nearing western Japan making it somewhat extremely difficult to paint outdoors.

As the typhoon nears these pictures will be painted in the studio, but this is not unlike Hokusai's charcoal painting or drawing after creating studies on site, then putting the finishing memory together in his studio back in Edo. Hopefully it seems that the typhoon will have a positive effect on the praxis because that is nature so it will be interesting to see what will happen back in the studio. Not every experiment will go as planned no matter how accident proof one decides to make it; that is life, people die, get sick, natural disasters happen etc…

Plate 8.4.4 reveals the continuing praxis of painting in the Ikawa Valley.

Plate 8.4.4 *Painting study,* 2004, acrylic on board, 12.5cm h x 22.5cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The above painting is the static construction of one moment of light that illuminates the Ikawa Valley landscape. This can be seen in the sky which has no traces of differing lights through the day and also in the trees on the right hand side of the image that have the painted traditions of light and shade from one direction of illumination.

The Japanese landscape in the hills with its heavily foliaged trees presents a very alien sensation for the shadows are very Prussian black in hue which are unlike the terrain in Perth. It has been a surprising sense experience to paint the shadows for they are much darker than the sensations to which I have so far been accustomed.

In Plate 8.4.5 is the palette used on site in the Ikawa Valley.

Plate 8.4.5 *Painting study and palette,* 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The paintings now are being constructed in the studio, due to the strength of the typhoon, as there is ample photographic evidence from the original sites.

This influence upon the work, caused by the approach of the typhoon, cannot be stopped but nor can the research. So as a secondary stimulus to the research, the photographs will be used to exhibit the effects of light and the static traditions of painting landscape in the studio as seen in Plate 8.4.6 as it is now almost impossible to paint outdoors, because of the typhoon.

Plate 8.4.6 *Studio, Kobe,* 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The typhoon has cleared and the clarity of distance and colour in the landscape is amazing as seen in Plate 8.4.7.

Plate 8.4.7 *Ikawa Valley,* 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The motif of an old Japanese house with the heavily green foliage in the foreground and distant hills is strangely enhanced with a truck passing in front of it through the traditional Japanese style colours adorning the vehicle.

The intensity of the typhoon over several days has made the sky/distant landscape far clearer. It is amazing actually as it does not seem like the same place. The sky is a deeper cerulean blue, the foliage a denser range of greens, and the distance of the valley is far clearer and these sharper hues in the landscape shift the range of colours in the palette.

In Plate 8.4.8 there is in the left hand painting the recognition of time and, on the right, the traditional methodology of painting the landscape.

Plate 8.4.8 *Painting studies,* 2004, acrylic on board, 12.5cm h x 22.5cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The left hand image exhibits the motion of light through time and therefore has a multiplicity of hues contrasts and tones that recognize those shifts of light. There is the magenta marking within both of the artwork the traditional praxis for accuracy and motion of time painting for how visual flux might well be experienced as within an image.

The contrast between the two attitudes of painting is starting to exhibit itself in the praxis as the static traditional image of painting reveals what is there at a moment in time whereas the painted through time experiment reveals a rupture in the traditions of form.

Plate 8.4.9 exhibits another motif in the east side of the Ikawa valley.

Plate 8.4.9 *Painting studies,* 2004, acrylic on board, 12.5cm h x 22.5cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Again in the above images the left hand painting exhibits painted time, these images will be continued to be worked on in the studio with visual documentation in the form of photographs the research being not dissimilar in the way Monet worked from on site and in the studio.

Nature can interrupt any research and one must be adaptable to external influences; certainly technologies are more extensive today, many more than simply the black

and white photography as was the case when Monet was painting, which facilitate the current studio painting.

Plates 8.4.10 and 8.4.11 exhibit studio praxis.

Plate 8.4.10 *Painting studies,* 2004, acrylic on board, 12.5cm h x 22.5cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Plate 8.4.11 *Painting studies,* 2004, acrylic on board, 12.5cm h x 22.5cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

These artworks are still being painted in the studio, as the weather is not conducive to painting.

Today it is still wet and windy as it has been over the last few days so the painting campaign will continue back in the Ikawa valley when the weather breaks. The

visual evidence in the separation between innovative methodologies in rendering oil traces, juxtaposed against the traditions of oil painting, is starting to evolve through the praxis now. For example, the left hand painting in Plate 8.4.11 represents a personal synthesis of painting, meaning that the speckled qualities of light represent differing times of recognition through the day and the evening, plus the changing weathers such as white and greyish part of clouds areas painted as they transgress the picture plane. And the right hand exhibits the taught traditions of image making, representing one moment of light within the picture plane and adherence to the traditions of form, tone and perspective.

Plate 8.4.12 reveals the developing system of painting.

Plate 8.4.12 *Painting studies,* 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The weather is far worse than expected and it looks as it will remain so for several days to come due to the typhoon's influence.

The density of rain has increased to my surprise. The images are working well due to use of the professional artist's acrylic with retarder medium and softer brushes, as it allows a greater sensitivity in applying the brush traces. The disposable palette provides a fresh surface to mix the paint on every day. This prevents contamination from previously mixed paint recognized from a different moment of time.

Plate 8.4.13 reveals the beginning of a new motif being painted, whilst Plate 8.4.14 exhibits the ongoing praxis from another motif.

Plate 8.4.13 *Painting studies*, acrylic on board, 12.5cm h x 22.5cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Plate 8.4.14 *Painting studies*, acrylic on board, 12.5cm h x 22.5cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The paintings are not in sequential date order but represent when painting resumed at the Ikawa valley. The rain has finally stopped. Now the praxis is only on the time-based work in the valley.

The main reason that painting in sequence is not possible is that there are too many variable factors that continue to intrude on such a rigid frame work. Firstly, the weather does not allow painting to take place on sequential days, because one would be either be completely soaked, the painting ruined or just blown away with the strong winds. So some paintings have to been painted either in shelter, thus altering the motif significantly, or started afresh, thereby changing any idea of cohesive painting.

Plate 8.4.15 exhibits shifting atmospheric hues during the praxis.

Plate 8.4.15 *Painting studies* 2004, acrylic on board, 12.5cm h x 22.5cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

As there has been a substantial amount of rain there are mainly grey hues and tones within the time based picture plane.

The developing image of the time based painting in Plate 8.4.15 works well as an image for two main reasons. The first is the system of painting now being used as a result of the soft brushes along with the retarder medium mixed with the softer professional quality acrylic paint. The second issue now becoming clear is that the system is much better equipped to handle how the remembrances on site and in the studio are painted on to the primed board far more succinctly in line with what has been remembered.

Plate 8.4.16 exhibits changing weather conditions over a bridge in the Ikawa valley.

Plate 8.4.16 *Painting studies,* 2004, acrylic on board, 12.5cm h x 22.5cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The rain comes and goes across the picture plane sometimes heavy, sometimes light and as the days slowly turns into the nocturne, the hues become interesting to paint, it's actually one of my favourite times to paint..

The contrasts of other recognised hues of the day that have not been painted out have accentuated the separate times of recognised painted light within the picture plane.

Plate 8.4.17 presents differing light conditions.

Plate 8.4.17 *Painting studies,* 2004, acrylic on board, 12.5cm h x 22.5cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Painting traces from a fine day are now being painted over with grey bluish hues representing torrential spring rain.

Although various times of light and weather are painted, the image as a whole is unusually cohesive which represents a positive result from the experiment. This is surprising in the sense that the surface's qualities from the developing system of painting praxis actually enhance the imagery, thus allowing the image to be seen as a cohesive whole. The visual unity of surface qualities was something that really needed working out and the retarder medium in the acrylic paint has solved the problem.

Plate 8.4.18 reveals the ongoing moist weather for in Japan now it is the rainy season and it is very unlike Australia.

Plate 8.4.18 *Painting studies* 2004, acrylic on board, 12.5cm h x 22.5cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Due to the ongoing heavy rain, the atmospheric paint traces are more saturated in colour. This is because the downpour has washed the pollution out of the sky and therefore everything is now far more clearly seen.

In returning to the studio after the day's painting and placing the time based image next to the traditionally rendered picture, the difference between the two praxis experiments has become far more accentuated.

This rupture can be seen in Plate 8.4.18 exhibited through overlaying painting sensations from differing days and times whereas the traditions of painting contract to the idea of one moment, thus nothing actually alters objectively. But this by no means signals that the painting is good as there are personal aesthetic issues (e.g., refining the surface qualities to become more painterly and in sync with idiosyncratic calligraphic vision) to be resolved and essentially this is what this journey is about. Plate 8.4.19 represents the final stage of the experiment.

Plate 8.4.19 *Painting studies*, 2004 acrylic on board, 12.5cm h x 22.5cm w by Peter Davidson

Sometimes to go back to a former motif, tends to be ideal in letting delay influence the memory (vision).

Delay in painting is little understood but has an enormous effect on how painters perceive the external world; from the moment the brush trace marks the canvas or board with pigmentation representing an idea, delay becomes an inevitable influence in painting between the next traces. The time lapse itself does not matter. It will happen that, in the time between brush marks, there is the influence from a multiplicity of factors (both natural and unexpected) that will in some way alter your imagery within this area towards the idiosyncratic calligraphic vision. This seems to result in a positive effect as evidenced in this painting praxis.

Chapter 9 Approach to Praxis

9.1 Introduction

As in previous chapters, italicised comments from the day's painting are interspersed with process analysis. In each instance the completed image presented is followed by the italicised reflections; the process analysis traces the pathway through the reflection in order to map the journey towards the idiosyncratic calligraphic horizon.

9.2 The Yellow Teapot

In Plate 9.2.1 the motif is the yellow teapot in the Western Australian studio.

Plate 9.2.1 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The purpose of the still life being painted in the studio is that the variations of light and weather changes remain relatively constant insofar as that is possible. In creating this motif within a confined setting, the praxis will be juxtaposed against another series of outdoor painted motifs. This ongoing investigation into the idiosyncratic calligraphic vision in painting needs to be more than one dimensional. It needs an array of motifs to see how vision becomes memory, then thought into action reveals itself as oil traces when subjected to differing conditions, and how that vision is realised upon inspection of the day's painting.

Plates 9.2.1 to 9.2.3 display the first initial raw direct painted sensations from the motif in a painterly search towards realising the idiosyncratic vision.

Plate 9.2.2 *The Yellow Teapot,* 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

There is no easy way to understanding the idiosyncratic calligraphic vision as the history of artists who have achieved it has revealed. It more or less happens through the determination of the artist's praxis and the subsequent analysis of what has happened in that time spent in front of the canvas.

The first attentive oil traces rupture the white canvas as if some kind of first contact had been made given that there is no formal prescribed outcome for the painted image in that prescribed outcome is that the traditions of form, tone and perspective will not dictate the rendering of the desired idea, that being a painted calligraphic vision.

Yet there is no doubt that some of these traditional techniques in painting will be incorporated into the praxis; however they will not dominate this painterly investigation or serve any aesthetic measure. In practice this means that, in some instances, the traditions of form will be used alongside differing paint marks representing time. Plate 9.2.3 exhibits the first tentative paint traces on the canvas.

Plate 9.2.3 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

One of the difficulties revealing itself quite graphically in this painting is my visual movement as a painter against a static object.

The visual flux that occurs from sighting a static object is also magnified by the mirror in the background of the motif directly behind the pot so returning to view the subject matter, through each sighting and then placing paint traces from what has been seen, has the effect of making the area of canvas behind the oil traces describing the teapot different from the prior visual recognitions that have been painted.

A partial resolution in solving visual flux (natural visual chaos) against a static motif was through the Tonking method of painting straight lines. This painting technique was created by the English painter Henry Tonks 1862 – 1937 who was a surgeon and

Professor at the Slade School of Art in London. His innovation, turned technique, achieved the creation of straight edges onto the canvas as sighted from the picture plane.

Plate 9.2.4 reveals the outcome of implementing the Tonking method which is more or less a guide to some edge that has been realised during painting, a momentary recognition of one's flux on the edge of a wall or table.

Plate 9.2.4 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Raw sensations of natural vision require a high sensibility of painting.

It is becoming obvious that the idiosyncratic vision in painting is going to be a very long journey indeed for the system painting required to render vision is going to take some time. Oct 2003

Plates 9.2.4 to 9.2.8 represent sensations and the struggle of how to articulate raw sensations into oil paint. The difficulty at the moment tends to be how to get the desired surface qualities to reflect the memory of what has been sighted as only then will the synthesis of the painter be revealed.

Plate 9.2.5 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004 oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

> *Each day's painting is full of new sensations that come streaming in from the picture plane, ranging from subtle changes in colour tones, to variations of where the edges were once placed and now seem strangely out of visual sync because of the way one sits on the chair shifts through time; this is the natural order of movement (chaos).*

As this image is being constructed directly from the motif, these visual sensations are fresh, momentary and must be painted that way to get these visions down as paint traces on canvas without too much influence. That means the palette and brushes

must be fresh for each campaign at the easel. The system of arrangement of colour on the palette from what has been sighted on the motif should be placed with a kind of strategic arrangement that will best suit the painting praxis. Plate 9.2.6 reveals that the praxis is developing slowly.

Plate 9.2.6 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The refraction of light on the pot along with the reflection of the teapot in the mirror is creating visual havoc (natural order). It's difficult enough when trying to produce a painting system to realise the sensations of working through time and knowing that the traditions of painterliness are not made to accommodate time but tend to contract time to a singularly artificial moment through the methods of painting tone, form and perspective in technical application to the landscape.

The solution is to paint the recognition of light as it occurs on the motif's public surfaces, as registered through vision and recalled by memory. Inclusive in this is the plastic tradition of painting incorporated (influence) into one's developing system of painting. This means that taught traditions in painting will be used as needed in the ongoing development of praxis towards the calligraphic horizon of the idiosyncratic image. Plate 9.2.7 exhibits the painted hues as developing in patches.

Plate 9.2.7 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The paint is still wet and it has to dry. The last recognitions of sight represented as oil trace on canvas, are now accumulated as variety patches in greens and greys, sitting on top of other a priori seen different hues of other painted moments thus representing various times of light.

The idea in paint is never sufficient as it has to work as an image; so, in now examining the painting, it seems this is a long way off at the moment. Plate 9.2.8 resonates the slow progress of the praxis.

Plate 9.2.8 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

> *It would be really easy to return to the traditions of the plastics rather than push on with the developing painting system. Firstly, there would not be so much mixing of paint before each painting campaign. The range of hues represented within the current subject matter may well be more limited and, as the traditions have already been forged, the journey towards the collective aesthetic of the middle class taste that is not that far from the inner circle of the mundane, could well be reached easily.*

Unfortunately, there is no easy road to understanding one's synthesis in painting; more often than not they are hard roads but very interesting and this painting

campaign at the moment is surely revealing that - frustratingly so as evidenced in Plate 9.2.9.

Plate 9.2.9 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

> *Each day's painting is slow. Not only is the visual chaos (natural order) proving difficult in rendering the synthesis of vision but issues of compromise continually nag from the taught methodologies of history's paintings.*

Part of the slowness in the painting can be attributed to the nature of the drying of oils. The other reason is that the traditions of paintings inevitably influence the memory when one is applying oil traces, with the distant lecturer's echoes of methodologies of rendering form, tone and perspective which really have no relevance now other than as some sort of artifice to achieve aesthetic meaning; nevertheless one can use them if they are deemed necessary.

The developing system of painting from what is recalled from memory is the only saving grace at the moment. It is rigorous, demanding and does not allow laxity from the understanding of what your sensations in oil traces are revealing to you. For instance, if one does not clean the brushes properly, other wet traces may squeeze out the side of the brush hair thus adversely influencing the freshly mixed painted sensations. Therefore brushes need to be cleaned thoroughly before each painting session. The palette has to be cleaned before as well. These, it seems, are important necessities for making the oil traces from sensation without the influence of other hues. This allows the sensations to be placed succinctly as seen on the motif through time creating a rigorous system of painting demand that must be adhered to.

Plates 9.2.10 to 9.2.11 reveal the struggle in painting objectively as it enters what one might suggest the mid stream phase of the painting experiments of this particular motif.

Plate 9.2.10 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Sometimes there is seemingly just struggle as the only outcome from the day's painting.

Nothing is more frustrating in a painting experiment than feeling as if the wall is so thick that your sensations will never allow you to realise further how one can achieve a calligraphic vision. Nevertheless through painting, even in times of struggle in sorting out one's system, there are some issues that raise themselves such as the paint brushes not rendering the sensation as required and which therefore may need changing to a softer variety.

Plate 9.2.11 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas,
36 cm h x 40 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The realisations that the influence of the rupturing of visual flux is omnipresent whilst painting are the changing light condition and ones movement of vision.

Kenneth Clark (1976) so aptly called this *The Strangeness of Natural Vision* in his book *Landscape into Art* when examining Monet's Haystack paintings. This was because of his determination not to alter the sensation towards the taught technical painting methodologies of history as Monet had painted through delay from memory of the haystacks within the studio.

So it may be well not to alter sensations but sort the system out first which, at the moment, is the major problem. It seems that, to revert to learned methodologies in

painting, will only stagnate one's path towards a calligraphic horizon. Plate 9.2.12 exhibits a continuing problem with the painting system.

Plate 9.2.12 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

> *Another fragmented slow day of painting. The motif is not sustaining the interest as first thought. The creation of the system of painting is taking longer than first thought. One's guess is that the lack of progress in praxis is helping the interest in the motif to wane.*

Once one has seen master artworks like the 1998 Cezanne show at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, especially the surface qualities, then to compromise is not a feasible option if one is serious. Seeing Cezanne's painting made one realise that surface qualities are important and a system in painting is what makes one achieve their sensation. Without a personally developed system in painting for one's memory,

then the calligraphic journey will not exist other than to be a circular track with only the same scenery to paint time and time again; nothing will be learned. Plate 9.2.13 reveals the continuing problems with the system of painting.

Plate 9.2.13 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

> *The paint traces are really unsatisfactory to desired intentions and therefore the image is looking tired and unresolved. This is proving very frustrating at this point of time.*

How to resolve this problem remains the issue and there is the suspicion that it is not going to be for a while yet and the paint traces within Plate 9.2.14 tend to confirm the existence of this problem.

Plate 9.2.14 T*he Yellow Teapot,* 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

How easy it would be to totally revert to the trained traditions of painting to finish this image but that is not an answer for natural or calligraphic vision.

The essential issue for the painter is how one creates a system about one's own aesthetic measure and no one else's and this is a central purpose of the experiments.

Creating a painting system that will render the paint traces succinctly with the idea would be a definite relief right now but it is not happening anywhere near what one might desire right now. Plate 9.2.15 reveals an extraordinarily slow and seemingly unsuccessful campaign in painting so far.

Plate 9.2.15 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Another day of painting at the coalface. For all the slavery to the developing system something is still not working. It may be the medium that is being mixed with the paint that somehow the traces are not representing the sensation that is desired on the canvas. It seems so cement like and the more medium used it becomes uncontrolled..

So it seems a shift in what is mixed with the paint on the palette may well be necessary. It could mean mixing the paint to a desired viscosity.

The colour of time may be accurate recalled vision but it still does not have the hallmarks of a good painting within what might be called interesting surface qualities.

Plate 9.2.16 confirms the lack of good surface qualities which have not developed in the research thus far.

Plate 9.2.16 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

This is a frustratingly slow painting campaign. There seems no choice but to continue to paint through it and see what might be gleaned from the effort.

The underlying painted time travel is starting to show through from the over painted recognition of light which is different in hue and tone from the first traces that were placed upon the canvas. This is most obvious in Plate 9.2.17 within the foreground lime green plastic sheet upon which the teapot sits. Yet the painting still looks like a lame duck, which is very disappointing and drains one's enthusiasm somewhat.

Plate 9.2.17 *The Yellow Teapot,* 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

A sort of strange vision is starting to take shape but ever so slowly. For example, the tablecloth colour with the range of greens resonates an uneasy order from the light that refracts from it through time. The form painted in a traditional methodology may well produce a recognized harmonization but here there is an unrecognized harmony that seems to be developing.

There are spectra of colour from late evening light ochre orange tones, midday off white saturated bone hues, with very light cerulean blue tones reflecting on the canvas in the mirror, with a myriad of afternoon lime greens, shifting with the fading light and coming through from the under-painted colour configurations from prior painted sensations in morning viridian greens, cold grey tones with slightly tinted purple tones of the evening and late evening light. So maybe some slight progression has occurred in the painting. Plates 9.2.18 to 9.2.22 reveal the ongoing slow progress made in the study thus far.

Plate 9.2.18 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

At the moment the struggle to realise the calligraphic vision is painfully slow. This may well be due to my rush to get there and only patience with persistence might reveal very slowly what one could be happy with as painter.

Knowledge gleaned from the oil traces once they are dried in the painting are almost grudgingly surrendered into realisations and, at the moment, one might be tempted to call this a drought in this painterly journey. It is certainly not yet a product stage of the experiment.

Plate 9.2.19 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The praxis is now appallingly slow in realisations. But whoever said it was meant to be fast. On the contrary, the masters of painting took many decades to become good and realize painterly issues.

There is some headway being made as the paint is starting to become thicker and the under-painted colour configurations of light recognized from other times of painting is starting to become more apparent. Therefore the image is becoming slightly more interesting. Unfortunately *more interesting* needs to translate into a competent system of painting and that seems very hard to achieve within the space of time required in this research.

Plate 9.2.20 *The Yellow Teapot,* 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Another slow day at the studio but at least the contrasts of colour are now starting to be exhibited within the painting.

It is apparent at the moment that, no matter what one tries to achieve within the painting, the results are appallingly ordinary. In looking at master artworks there is, within the oil traces on the canvas, a cohesive visual unity in the surface qualities that achieves the sensation the artist has been looking to exhibit, this being a coherent painted harmony of the desired idea, even if the image resonates no harmony whatsoever.

Plate 9.2.21 *The Yellow Teapot,* 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The window in the mirror is now becoming filled with painted shrubbery from outside the studio. This is a visually confusing phenomenon to paint due to flux of light and one's flux in painting so, somewhere within the canvas representing the mirror and shrubbery, there are to be some arbitrary painterly decisions made that will exhibit the idea of the praxis.

These paintings are not good in themselves but the investment from the experiment is starting to yield results in terms of the clarity in the paint traces of hue that are now being placed on to the canvas. This has occurred through the system of painting, along with the demands of discipline with the cleaning of the palette/brushes and mixing the colours of time on the palette each session; this creates the sense of direction for a positive future. Having a developed painting system from praxis

towards an idea allows one more time to concentrate on understanding the paint traces in getting towards one's idea.

Plate 9.2.22 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

There is a noticeable increase in the contrasts being placed over the top of prior painted areas of light which, in turn, makes decisions more difficult as to what oil traces to leave and what to override. For example, in the teapot near the spot, there is a range of mid yellowish greens that indicates various shifts of light through the day and evening, thus presenting a complex problem not only in what to finally leave but in the overall aesthetic of the surface oil qualities in how to make it a unified image.

There is no easy solution to the choices that constantly present themselves across the picture plane which is the hard part about painting. Historically it has been difficult

for artists to make choices on personal aesthetics especially when the system of painting is underdeveloped as it is now.

Plates 9.2.23 to 9.2.31 describe the finishing stages of a not so successful campaign at the start of the research towards an Idiosyncratic Calligraphic Vision in Painting.

Plate 9.2.23 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w, by Peter Davidson. (1958 -)

The light on the background is always changing so the tones have to be subtle to reflect this phenomenon of constantly shifting light; even the slightest movement of vision through physical movement shifts the sensation of the light.

These small shifts in hue and tone require a new palette with each new painting session because, when mixing the nuances from the sensations that are remembered,

each is ever so slight. The range that can be applied to the canvas can be quite extensive if the system is adapted to accommodate such liminal sensations from memory. Therefore the palette becomes an instrumental part of the painting, not something different. It is where the image is first developed in a sense, and then transferred through oil traces into a cohesive personal aesthetic on canvas.

Plate 9.2.24 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The view on the mirror of the window is very unusual due to the dramatic nature of the flux of light on the shrubbery outside, compared to what almost seems to be very static light within the studio at times.

These spectacular shifts of light create interesting sensations to paint because the motif consists of an external landscape and an interior scape with the landscape as seen through the mirror subject to dramatic light changes from the earth moving

through time in its relationship to the sun and weathers. Whilst the interior scape is variable as it does change due to night and day, it lacks the dramatic contrasts as seen through the window.

Plate 9.2.25 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

> *The yellow pot takes on a range of hues during the day - from raw umber, green yellow ochre to the highest tonal sensation of French ultramarine, cerulean pale blue. The palette is set out from the left hand side to right - three whites, a cadmium yellow, cerulean, French ultra marine blue, magenta, cadmium red, yellow ochre, viridian, terre-verte, raw umber as a usual rule but not always.*

Systems in painting should be able to accommodate new sensations in painting and this might mean modifying the developed methodology ever so slightly to accommodate each new sensation. For example, it may mean a shift in the amount of

medium used with the oil paint making it somewhat softer to articulate a delicate sensation so it comes off the brush on to the canvas with easier application. These subtle shifts in methodology are important in expanding the journey to the calligraphic horizon.

Plate 9.2.26 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The contrasts are now revealing themselves in a broad spectrum of hue but still there is not much happiness with the image as a painting.

This has seriously been a campaign of painterly frustrations.

Plate 9.2.27 *The Yellow Teapot,* 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Focusing on the hue contrasts in the motif.

Hue and contrast seen within the picture plane give a sense of structure and completeness to the image as a whole, as the density of painting creates presence and this can only be achieved through the most accurate mixing of colour from the sense data seen or remembered on the motif. The issue of compromise is always present in creating an image. Nothing is rendered completely objectively and this realisation from examination of the paint traces has been a crucial lesson so far in the praxis.

Plate 9.2.28 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson. (1958 -)

The vision of the image still lacks what would be considered interesting surface qualities in paint.

Surface qualities in paint have really been a letdown during this experiment. It has nagged me constantly towards achieving something that one might consider interesting, instead of laboured to death.

Plate 9.2.29 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The motif has not sustained the sensations as hoped.

It has been a long journey to produce paintings that could not be considered interesting. Such judgements stem from making comparisons in relationship to what has been visually experienced in seeing master artworks in Japan on a regular basis and, once images of such quality are available to see on an everyday basis, the difference becomes obvious.

That the unification of surface oil traces has failed to eventuate to a desired level of personal aesthetic has been disappointing but no doubt the system to render the memory has improved which is encouraging. In Plate 9.2.30 there are the beginnings of reasonably interesting surface qualities represented in the subtle colours mixed

with the wax medium, along with range of tonalities, especially in the tea pot. It is heartening to see improvement towards the desired aesthetic.

Plate 9.2.30 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson

> *At times compromise is necessary. The nature of any experimental journey in painting is that it is experimental and any thought that one methodology will get you to a desired but unforseen destination is not practical. Compromise must be part of any painter's system; the only alternative is contraction to what is already known.*

Finding the compromise in image making is always going to be the hardest, if not the most crucial element in praxis. It is something painters do all the time for memory in painting is not perfect recall. Consequently something else intrudes upon one's

painting and this physical absence is compromise and its complete spectrum of associated phenomena.

For example, in the mirror exhibiting the external motif, there are some soft afternoon hues of the setting sun that disappeared very quickly from the picture plane. The colours were not only seductive but enhanced the painting through the broadening of the spectra of colours; therefore it was painted as remembered through delay which, in its own way, is a kind of compromise for a better aesthetic.

Plate 9.2.31 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson

The praxis of the yellow teapots has helped partially resolve the system of painting to articulate the sense data received from the public surface so that the oil traces are placed with enhanced calligraphic vision.

There is a very long journey which is obvious through continually making comparisons with master artworks on show in Japan and how wonderfully they unify the surfaces of painting from their ideas to achieve a calligraphic vision with which one might feel reasonably satisfied. For the moment, however, it looks like a complete rethink is necessary about the system of painting. This has been an extremely disappointing experiment in painting so far, actually quite miserable in terms of the surface qualities achieved due to the lack of unity with the paint surfaces because the brushes, oil paints, mediums and artistic actions are not yet in sync with the idea.

9.3 Experimentation with sense data

The act of painting something with coherence often relies on one's eye/hand co-ordination and how it articulates the remembered sensations of what has been seen. It is this practice of understanding the sense data from the public surface of objects (those surfaces only the eye can see) and translating these into movements of the hand with a brush loaded with oil paint that starts to give the artist the desired image upon the canvas.

Hence it is necessary to apply several kinds of sense data from differing chosen motifs, to be painted, thus acknowledging the diversity of terrain a painter has to articulate into paint traces within the daily activity of praxis. As evidenced thus far, a yellow teapot with various experimental lighting conditions placed upon it has been painted. These aforementioned praxis circumstances have been limited in terms of the sense data available to paint.

Diversification of sense data can take various forms in terms of light, colour, shape and texture within the chosen motifs and all these conditions need to be used within this praxis to reveal the dexterity of eye/hand co-ordination that seems at the moment the most fundamental issue leading to the idiosyncratic calligraphic vision.

9.4 Experimentation with light

This next series of experiments will contain various arrangements to see how painting is executed in several conditions of light, colour and form of objects, so the sense data are widened to encapsulate differing painterly applications to enhance the idiosyncratic calligraphic vision. The motif in Plate 9.4.1 is a Japanese Teapot

painted for this praxis in Japan and the following section explains the journey through each day's praxis.

Plate 9.4.1 *Praxis with Japanese teapot 2004,* digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

> *Whatever the expectations were of Japan, flying from Cairns to Osaka, landing at Kansia Airport then limousine bus to Kobe, shattered every accrued urban sensation experienced so far in Australia. Nothing could have prepared one for what was currently being experienced in terms of the intensity of Japan, the scale of industry, the immense cold, the size of the living quarters, the millions of people, subways, etc...*

The decision to go and paint objectively in a completely alien terrain was always designed to present a challenge. The tones and textures of a new environment such as Nippon would surely present sensations that had not been experienced before, so the mixing of these within the system of painting was likely to be difficult. There is no

doubt that the previous influences on memory achieved in painting in the many years whilst residing in Australia would have some bearing on the final painted images in Japan. So, with this in mind, it was going to be interesting to see what would happen in the praxis now.

In the ensuing weeks motifs were painted for a variety of reasons. The Japanese teapot was acquired for two purposes - the first was to echo the praxis of the Yellow Teapot (e.g., Plate 9.2.31) that was painted rather unsuccessfully in Australia. The second was the temperature as it was logical to paint indoors, given that it was extremely cold in January and it is a cold that is extremely debilitating. The teapot was acquired in the ceramic department from a Japanese store known as Sogo, akin to an upmarket Myers in Japan. The teapot had very little familiarity, meaning that the objective sensations towards the pot had the potential to stay relatively unfamiliar for a sustained period of time which was crucial towards revealing the sensations of visual flux as they happened. If the teapot had been used as a gift or utensil, there would have been potential for subjective and narrative memories to be attached to the painting.

The praxis of the teapot was created in a back room of a thirty plus storey block of high-rise apartments. The studio is not much bigger than a medium sized laundry in an Australian household and has little or no influence from external light with little of the day's sunlight affecting the motif. The intention is to keep the illumination of the object as static as possible, so the moment of vision against a static object can reveal itself on the canvas. This is a phenomenon that will henceforth be referred to as visual flux. Unlike Australia, the light penetrating within this huge apartment block was really very minimal.

Due to the proximity of apartments and the limited room within the one being used for this praxis, the medium for painting had to be changed as oil could no longer be used for health reasons due to the fumes given off in such a confined space The choice was thus to go back to the acrylic painting system that was used in the early nineteen eighties whilst at art school, with soft synthetic nylon brushes and, inasmuch as this was forced upon the research by the limited space available to paint in Japan, there was also the remembrance of a prior painting that had developed desirable surface qualities, the kind that seemed necessary now.

The synthetic brushes were replaced with a better quality one in Japan called *Hard* re-sable made by Holbein. Mixed with the soft acrylic professional artist quality paint that is integrated with retarder medium, this allows very responsive traces from memory to appear on the canvas, more so than experienced so far with oil painting. There is also the surface quality of paint that becomes aesthetically desirable when the retarder medium is mixed with acrylic and, after being placed on the canvas, the bonus is that is dries quicker and allows more experimentation to take place with good results appearing in the traces as to what might be desired towards the ultimate idea. Plate 9.4.1 exhibits the new motif of the Japanese teapot in the small studio at the Kobe apartment. Plates 9.4.2, 9.4.3 to 9.4.4 reveal the strategy to attain a system of painting that will enhance the idiosyncratic calligraphic vision.

The first steps of the revisited acrylic painting system can be evidenced in Plate 9.4.2.

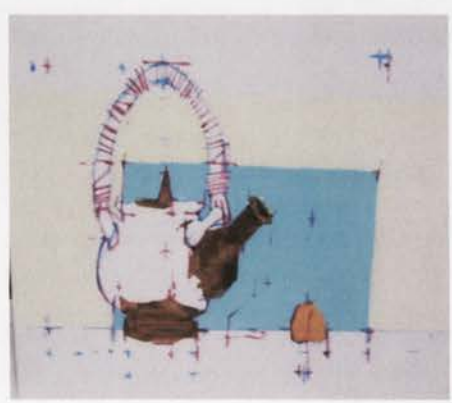

Plate 9.4.2 *Japanese Teapot 1,* 2004 acrylic on canvas board, 38 cm h x 45.5 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The blue paper background and the apricot were added to the motif because the teapot is going to be a motif in two separate paintings. Whilst staying in Japan this time, the need to separate each painting became important; therefore in the next painting of the teapot there will be a different piece of coloured paper behind the pot.

The small cruciform marks are simply registrations of visual flux through time which indicate the shifts of vision against a static object as distortion from some sort of strategy to get the motif exactly like the regulation traditional aesthetic traditionally taught in painting.

Strangely the flat spatial surface qualities as evidenced in Japanese Ukiyo-e master woodblock prints (see Plate 9.4.3) that have been collected for study over the last decade

Plate 9.4.3 Kunichika Toyohara (1835 - 1900) woodblock print, circa approximately 1860, 33 cm h x 21.5 cm w, Collection of Peter Davidson

have started to influence the painting, especially in the surface qualities behind the teapot as seen in Plate 9.4.4.

Plate 9.4.4 *Japanese Teapot 1*, 2004 acrylic on canvas board, 38 cm h x 45.5 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The variation in painting through the differing illuminations of light associated with night and day has forced a rethink towards the current system of painting because of the constancy of the fluorescent light in the ceiling above. As one could no longer use oils in this confined space, given the toxicity of fumes, acrylic became the other option. Furthermore, due to the fast drying qualities of acrylic paint and the use of water based retarder medium, the days of praxis turned into session;, images could thus be accomplished in far shorter time.

The acrylic traces (mixed with a retarder medium) from recalled memory are much more flattened out due to the consistency of light that saturates the motif and the influence of Japanese Ukiyo-e (see Plate 9.4.3), so the traces of colour may well shift on the subject matter being painted but ever so liminally. This new use of painting with acrylic and retarder medium achieved some good results almost immediately.

The painted surface qualities are far more accomplished (compared to what has been seen within the picture plane) and have a far greater presence with a matt finish that comes from the acrylic paint drying qualities.

Plates 9.4.5 to 9.4.8 reveal a system of painting that is progressing well through the adoption of new materials through a change of environment in rendering paint. The older system of painting with oils which consisted of just grinding along and waiting for the paint to dry did not seem to fit my painting temperament. Fortunately acrylic does, thus allowing many more solutions in painterly surface qualities and this came about, as explained earlier, from remembrance of a painting at art school some twenty years ago and how the surface qualities were resolved quickly through the medium drying far quicker than oils.

Plate 9.4.5 *Japanese Teapot 1*, 2004, acrylic on canvas board, 38 cm h x 45.5 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Each day the markings representing the shifting vision are in yellow, blue, magenta and cadmium red traces.

There is a tendency to make the image in sync with the traditions of painting and not allowing the natural chaos of vision to reveal itself as paint traces. Old habits tend to die hard but, in a way, it is best not to throw everything away as traditions, albeit even contractual ones, have taught us useful strategies as artists. The markings within these paintings are being used to show shifting vision, not measured exactitude as theoretically espoused by Coldstream or Uglow. This is important to understand for it is using a style of painting for one's own innovation in imagery not merely to be a copyist.

Plate 9.4.6 *Japanese Teapot 1*, 2004, acrylic on canvas board, 38 cm h x 45.5 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

As the acrylic painting is drying much quicker, the opportunity to return to painting after several hours is available and therefore layers of paint can be applied.

For instance, in Plate 9.4.5 in the background behind the teapot, there are several layers of cerulean light blue and, on the edge between the wall and the table, one slightly darker than the other; this is where the Tonking painting technique has been applied on to the canvas.

Plate 9.4.7 *Japanese Teapot 1*, 2004, acrylic on canvas board, 38 cm h x 45.5 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The use of acrylic paint with retarder medium and softer brushes has proved very beneficial as it has enhanced the calligraphic vision through being able to get the paint marks down with greater responsiveness to the sensations that are being remembered from vision.

Being in Japan is much better than Australia in terms of one's ability to go and see great master artworks, ranging from the Japanese Kano, Ukiyo - e, then to view the travelling exhibitions from the British Museum with Rubens, Rembrandt, the Klimt exhibition and William Turner's master etchings from the Fuji Collection; these works are easily seen in Kyoto, Osaka, Tokyo and Kobe. Having consistent and regular access to these works gives insight to systems that the master artist created and brings forth a sense of what is required to be a competent artist. Therefore one can transfer what is gleaned into knowledge through study of the master artist's surface qualities and how the manipulated paint marks describe various sensations. This learning can be seen in the ellipse of the kettle in the way the brush marks searches for form like Rubens although nowhere near as competently as him.

Plate 9.4.8 *Japanese Teapot 1*, 2004, acrylic on canvas board, 38 cm h x 45.5 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

There has been considerable progress made towards the calligraphic horizon. This has been enabled through creating a better system of painting and also through researching the masters' artworks that can be seen in Japan on a regular basis.

The paint traces are definitely becoming far more refined because they are being placed on the canvas from remembrance with far more confidence compared to the struggle experienced with the oil painted teapots. This is encouraging in the move forward towards the calligraphic horizon. The softness of the medium in the paint and the complete array of a new quiver of brushes that have softer hair have made it possible to articulate the sensations from remembrances with far more accuracy which is encouraging.

Within Plate 9.4.8 there is the evidence of what might be considered some solid gains in understanding one's synthesis of painting. This means that the whole complex synthesis in painting from objective vision towards the Calligraphic horizon is now revealing signs that the praxis is moving towards a coherent theory with some interesting paint surfaces that equal the idea. Ideas in painting are good but many a time it seems that the surface's qualities within some artist's painted theories are so

quotidian that it lets down the quality of thinking of the artist. Therefore the painted surface of the canvas is the place where the audience has access to the idea and, if it has nothing to captivate the senses, then they will soon move on. It is more or less why Rembrandt, Rubens and Cézanne are so successful their paint qualities hold you in front of the canvas.

9.5 Experimentation with colour

Plate 9.5.1 is the same motif but with a different coloured paper in the background.

Plate 9.5.1 *Teapot 2,* 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958-)

Due to the express drying of the acrylic, it has allowed time to paint another of this particular motif with a light yellowish green background added. The

colour change is necessary because of how one responds to it in terms of its relationship with other objects within the motif.

In Perth, as for most major cities in Australia, there has not been the range or the quality of such master artworks (paintings) to be scrutinized, especially in relation to how colour has been applied throughout the history of painting. In Japan a quick train ride takes you to see so many fantastic masterpieces to study at leisure and it does make a significant difference being able to see master artworks first hand. Thus the surface qualities now developing in the praxis have been learned from studying paintings from Rubens, Rembrandt, amongst many others, plus from realisations of one's own praxis. Plate 9.5.2 reveals the first initial paint traces..

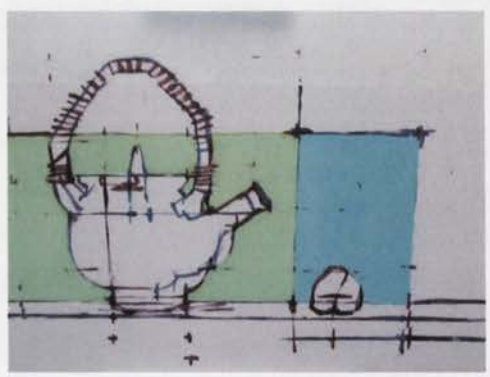

Plate 9.5.2 *Teapot 2*, 2004, acrylic on canvas board, 38 cm h x 45.5 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Having started to resolve the system of painting through the use of acrylics and retarder medium, large areas of the motif can be applied quickly. One

reason for this is the visual reception from the picture plane's hues doesn't change much when vision moves against the static subject matter. The hue appears to stay very much the same even though there is logically colour change but it's almost unrecognizable to the human eye.

Naturally colours shift through time and space but it is not the purpose of this research to speculate on what the nuances of hue might be and, as it is too liminal to be recorded as human optical sense data, the arbitrary solution may well be to paint a flat undisrupted picture plane which remains seemingly constant. To capture very liminal shifts of hue and tone no doubt could be possible but, as an artist, compromise for one's aesthetic choices is always going to happen and it is more or less the best solution. Plate 9.5.3 reveals the ongoing praxis of the colour experiment.

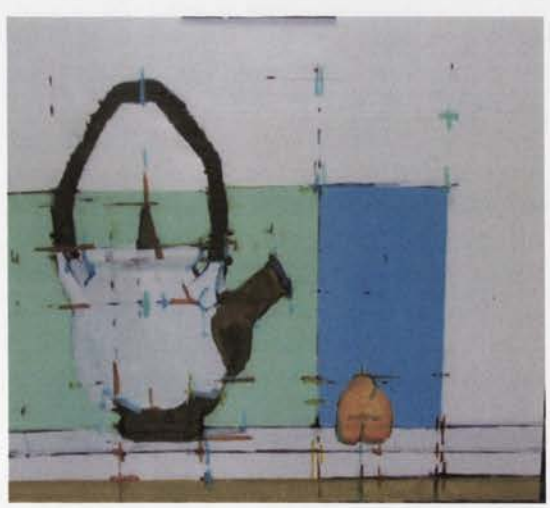

Plate 9.5.3 *Teapot 2*, 2004, acrylic on canvas board, 38 cm h x 45.5 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The praxis is improving and this is through the lack of space there is to paint in the studio and makes one focus on what is available to refine the system of painting which it turns inadvertently helps the research.

For instance, in the yellow teapot and inasmuch as that series of paintings did not work well through the struggle with the system of painting, the research space thus provided in which to resolve the system was enough. In Kobe the whole Japanese experience of seeing masterworks and reading about these painter's innovative systems of painting and how they realise the idea has, in some ways, very much influenced this research now in respect to what good surface qualities of painting might be and how they equal the internationalities of the artists' ideas. Plate 9.5.4 exhibits the nearing completion of the colour research.

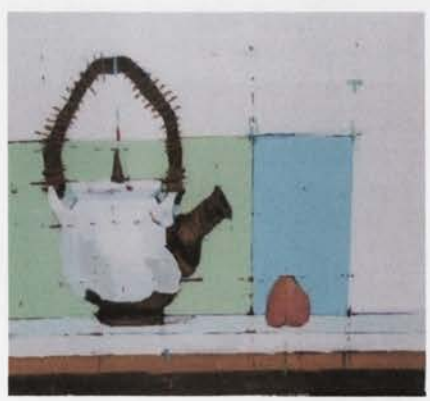

Plate 9.5.4 *Teapot 2*, 2004, acrylic on canvas board, 38 cm h x 45.5 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Broadening the range of hue within the picture plane has enhanced one's capabilities of rendering it with confidence.

Subsequently, since painting with acrylic professional quality paints, retarder medium that delays drying and gives the paint a slight viscous quality, softer brushes to apply the retarder medium, there has been a fairly substantial improvement in the surface quality of the artworks. This means that the way the applied paint resonates with the eye tends to leave a convincing sensation. The image on the canvas appears to be more than an illusion in the way it leaves an imprint on human memory thereby creating a presence of a real form with density.

One feels that, as the system of painting is slowly resolving itself, the surface qualities that are now being painted from the sensations are more in sync with what is being remembered. Hence movement outwards to the calligraphic horizon is slowly but surely gathering pace and that is a real relief after the somewhat disastrous campaign in painting the yellow teapot.

Chapter 10 Visual Data and Process (Landscape and Studio)

10.1 Experiment One - Palm Tress

Plate 10.1.1 presents the palm tree motif in my backyard in Perth which is right on the coastal highway so it is subjected to all the subtleties and extremities that light and nature can produce.

Plate 10.1.1 Palm Tree, 2004, digital photograph
by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

This is the first of a series of experiments into the nature of delay in painting from vision using this palm tree as the singular motif. It is the end of winter and the light shifts dramatically across the motif. The easel is set up at the studio door and will remain that way for the duration of the praxis.

Examining the effects of delay through the externalised paint traces on canvas will hopefully reveal some insight into the calligraphic vision with its subsequent journey. What has also been helpful is the Japanese experience in the way it has resolved the system of painting through experimentation with medium, paint brushes and how that now has provided some solutions in the use of oil paints. Plate 10.1.2 exhibits the palm tree in another quality of light.

Plate 10.1.2 *Palm Tree,* 2004, digital photograph
by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

As evidenced by the preceding photographs there is a significant change in the light conditions within a short space of time. So far no painting has been executed yet, maybe tonight or late evening. Painting through the night presents many difficulties in vision.

For instance, it is very hard to see through the density of liminal light to make out the motif as seen in daylight. Another painterly issue within the same image is the interaction in the painting's oil traces between day recognitions of light and those juxtaposed to the eight pm night light recognitions making it complex as to how you can secure the image into a coherent synthesis in painting. Plate 10.1.3 exhibits the first oil traces of the research into the palm tree motif.

Plate 10.1.3 *Palm Tree*, 2004, oil on canvas, 114 cm h x 65 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Monday, again the weather is stormy are the clouds are racing across the sky.

The light problems are not dissimilar to Claude Monet's dilemma: *"I am hard at it; I am adamant about doing a series of different effects (the stacks), but at this time of year the sun sets so quickly that I can't follow it....* The issue for me is that I am not doing a series of effects; this particular synthesis of painting is about confronting the light and weathers shifts as they occur through time and sighted by vision (memory) all within one painting. Plate 10.1.4 reveals a very strong wind blowing across the motif.

Plate 10.1.4 *Palm Tree*, 2004, digital photograph, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

> *It has been slow but steady painting and the oil traces have been reflecting various times of observation.*

Waiting for paint to dry, French ultramarine blues and very dark prussian oil traces throughout the canvas representing the night sky can be observed in the painting.

Sometimes realisations occur even when painting in front of the motif; for example, the remembrances of other times influence the painting representing the effect of delay upon memory. So no matter how objective the intention is when painting, there will always be some influence through time and space which is delay. Plate 10.1.5 reveals the development of the paint traces across the canvas.

Plate 10.1.5 *Palm Tree*, 2004, oil on canvas, 114 cm h x 65 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

> *There are two paintings being executed at the moment, so various painted observations from differing times are creating contrasts that seem extreme at the moment, if juxtaposed in the traditional methodology of one painted moment from a static source of light.*

For instance, there is in this painting a deep prussian blue representing the night on the trunk, with a pale blue sky in the background that grey clouds move across in the

spring. Also having the two paintings going at the same time is beneficial for it allows the paint to dry on one whilst working on another causing less delay or influence. Plate 10.1.6 exhibits hues of nature as affected by the temperatures of weather.

Plate 10.1.6 *Palm Tree*, 2004, oil on canvas, 114 cm h x 65 cm w
by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

A few small calligraphic strokes of light morning dew on the long grass at the base of palm tree in the painting represent the cold winter morning; for some reason this was painted on a warm spring afternoon.

Without deliberately being aware of how delay and influence work from memory, it has revealed itself with this particular passage of painting in the way that the hues of

a cold morning and its effects on nature are painted in the warm afternoon. Plate 10.1.7 presents the ongoing effect of a westerly wind on the motif.

Plate 10.1.7 *Palm Tree,* 2004, digital photograph, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

> *Lunch time, Monday twenty-third of September two thousand and two, the clouds on this spring day are racing across the sky. In having a motif outside subjected to all weathers and lights, there is always going to be the phenomenon of weather's randomness, adjusting your painting system to suit this is very difficult.*

A painting is always going to have some arbitrary influence that is just the nature of time and delay in the placement of oil traces upon the canvas. There is now a wax

medium being mixed in with the prepared oils to be painted from the day's sensations and it has added a softer dimension to the paint, thus allowing greater flexibility when applying it to the surfaces of the canvas permitting a better recording of one's remembrances. The wax medium has enhanced the quality of the paint traces towards a sensation that appeals to one's personal aesthetic. Plate 10.1.8 displays a developing system of painting.

Plate 10.1.8 *Palm Tree*, 2004, oil on canvas, 114 cm h x 65 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

> *There has been enough painting for the moment and the need to let the oil traces dry so one can paint over them again, without mixing the underpainting with the freshly created traces, has become essential in building a visually cohesive aesthetic.*

Interestingly the nature of the oil paint traces of prior painted memories and the most recent are interlocking and presenting a cohesive image in places as evidenced in Plate 10.1.8. In allowing the paint to dry there is no integration with the preceding memories because the underpainted vision stays as it was intended yet they do interact visually. In letting some of the first contact traces with the canvas exhibit themselves by not being overpainted by later sensations of applied hue, this interaction of painted traces from differing times of delay allows an aesthetic to exhibit itself. The clarity of oil traces is very deliberate because there is a mixing of colour on a clean fresh palette every session and the colours are mixed to reflect the differing weathers and times of day.

The advent of the flux of light in the evening where day turns into night has become very evident in this session of painting. Painting through time becomes visually complex because, when painting midday times of yesterday, sensations are over painted or placed adjacent to the evening's sensations so that it really challenges the traditions of landscape painting because of the historical strength of such imagery upon the human psyche. This is because there are not normally night traces of hue next to late afternoon or morning but usually one cohesive hue with associated contrasts of light representing a single moment of the day or night. The noticeable

event in memory is how the traces of paint start to reflect a sort of calligraphic sensation that vision acquires through the system of painting. The system creates the ease of putting the traces down more succinctly and coherently with the vision. For instance, if the paint hues are set out on the palette in a systematic manner, the co-ordination between eye, canvas and the board on which the paint is mixed on becomes almost second nature. It also lessens the delay somewhat when painting directly from the motif, thus bringing the image closer to the idea of the painter. Plate 10.1.9 is a photograph of a noon day time.

Plate10.1.9 *Palm Tree,* 2004, digital photograph
by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Almost a cloudless sky, this makes a change from the various weathers with the associated variations of clouds that have been racing across the sky in recent days.

Painting a cloudless sky over paint traces that are loaded in hue representing differing weathers and time brings to the image arbitrariness or a personal aesthetic which comes to the fore of what to put in the painting. It brings forth the artist's primacy of aesthetic judgement and, at some point or another, decisions critical to the success of the image have to be made; it is the hard part of being a painter and a point of great vulnerability. Plate 10.1.10 exhibits the night hues on the motif.

Plate 10.1.10 *Palm Tree*, 2004, night, digital photograph
by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The blackness of night is an extremely difficult sensation to paint for one can see the lightless vacuum of space with small glows of the urban terrain influencing it. Also it is necessary to show the digital photographs at differing times of light and weather affecting the motif to enhance the idea behind the painting.

In painting the sensations of various tones of blackness into the morning, afternoon and late evening, hues of colour that are now situated within the canvas make it extremely difficult to create a coherent image. This is due to the traditions of painting making us see in a certain way. For example, we might see as the impressionists painted. Therefore, insofar as one can ascertain, there have not been night traces of oil paint placed next to the midday, mid morning, late evening or afternoon painting marks. In thus creating such an aesthetic, the journey is about finding the kind of balance that has not been demonstrated in history to this point. Plate 10.1.11 exhibits the ongoing development of paint traces with the new system of painting.

Plate 10.1.11 *Palm Tree*, 2004, oil on canvas, 114 cm h x 65 cm w
by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Several days have passed before the paint is dry because the system of painting does not allow the mixing of memories in traces of paint. If one does

blend in wet on wet paint marks, the intention of painting differing times of weather and lights blends into one which defeats the idea.

Essentially it is wise in painting *time* to keep the traces of oil independent from each other through making sure the underpainting is dry before applying a new session of painting. Consequently what will exhibit itself are those defined moments of painted *time* as a personal aesthetic, thus demonstrating the nature of painted time travel. Plate 10.1.12 presents the differing recognition of paint traces from remembrances.

Plate 10.1.12 *Palm Tree*, 2004, oil on canvas, 114 cm h x 65 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

It is interesting to see the nature of different light recognitions as they sit side by side on the canvas.

The rupture of vision becomes quite evident. Even in using an innovative system of painting to acquire the colour of time through vision, one nevertheless still uses the taught traditions in some respect; the educated histories of painting still keep the fugitive prisoner at times. For instance, in the day's painting, there is a linear straight line of the building behind the palm; this is natural vision and not to be used as a measure of whether the painting is correct in perspective. The traditional conditions of perspective do not matter. What can be seen is a straight line and one notices that it quivers visually from my movement against something static.

Also midway up the trunk of the palm there is the colour of night and early morning on old downward palm leaves. Juxtaposed in the same area are hues from midday, late afternoon and evening and, strangely so far, it seems to reveal a cohesive aesthetic. The paint traces in Plate 10.1.13 record the shifting nature of light from painted remembrances.

Plate 10.1.13 *Palm Tree*, 2004, oil on canvas, 114 cm h x 65 cm w
by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

It is October and the weather is getting warmer and the shadows are shifting from the winter spring angles of light.

There is in the painting now a natural process of censorship or visual elimination of objects. This visual censorship helps unclutter the painting experiment in terms of the veranda at the back of the house or the multitude of leaves and ferns that tend to become a visual chaos that has somehow to be collapsed into a painted natural order.

Plate 10.1.14 displays the motif after the influence of weather.

Plate 10.1.14 *Palm Tree*, 2004, digital photograph
by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The cold winds from the southern oceans unceasingly batter the palm tree and at times with tremendous violence.

It is hard to paint that violence when already there is the serenity of prior evening with the painting. It is a very odd mixture of sensations to paint on to the canvas but, through the delay of applying oil traces, maybe it will come to an aesthetic with which one might be happy. Plates 10.1.15 to 10.1.24 exhibit the development of the system of painting towards the final images on the canvas.

Plate 10.1.15 *Palm Tree*, 2004, oil on canvas, 114 cm h x 65 cm w
by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Started a new painting today. It doesn't matter about the order for, if one did concern oneself with strict system of painting, then one might not paint something seen on a canvas within the studio obvious at the moment and needing attention. Therefore paintings get created when I feel like it, and they will be painted that way too,

I see no point in controlling the sequence of things because it would go against the chaos (natural order) of the experiment. If there were to be any type of absolute control in painting, one might well end up like William Coldstream who had a very interesting methodology but lacked insight into what was really happening within the picture plane as the light shifted through it. Therefore a system of painting must be

able to accommodate realisations such as the one Paul Cezanne sought out during his whole life as a painter.

Plate 10.1.16 *Palm Tree*, 2004, oil on canvas, 114 cm h x 65 cm w
by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

> *It is some weeks later that painting has began again. Delay kicks into the system of painting through the influence of memories that reveal themselves from prior sessions of painting.*

The oil traces not drying fast enough is frustrating and, in the cold months of the year, it is very annoying, plus it adds to the *delay* in painting; therefore influence will play a bigger part in applying paint from remembrances. *Delay* in painting is a kind of double edged sword. It can help at times when painting and it can also make you forget important moments of time not so much because they did not happen but the

clarity of the moment in hue seen on a particular motif that one wishes to paint may well be forgotten.

Plate 10.1.17 *Palm Tree,* 2004, oil on canvas, 114 cm h x 65 cm w
by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

> *Every day that painting resumes there is the obligatory cleaning of the brushes and palette. This is important to keep the other painting sessions and the leftover traces in the brushes away from the moments of applying oil traces.*

Sometimes this feels very surgical but essentially it is to keep the oil traces as precise as possible from vision. That integrity of each day's painting from differing remembrances must be maintained to get a reasonable record of events painted from

what is seen within the picture plane. Cleaning the palette/canvas is just as much a part of the system of painting and, in some ways, more so for it allows the paint traces from a new day's painting to be done without yesterday's or the day before its interference of oil paint.

Plate 10.1.18 *Palm Tree*, 2004, oil on canvas, 114 cm h x 65 cm w
by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The ochre coloured house wall is presenting some painting difficulties. The range of hue and tone that is being projected onto the wall by differing sunlights and nightlights through time is presenting some extreme colours.

There are some aesthetic concerns arising in the praxis about articulating the extreme oil traces representing sunlight (being pale apricot, light yellowish apricot, mid pale yellow ochre oranges of the setting sun), very saturated whitish ochres that are

interspersed with the early morning light green ochres and mauves from the late evening night have surfaced. Due to the range of colours on the long flat wall behind the palm tree being so diverse, it is strange to paint these sensations side by side. And as one progresses outwards to the calligraphic horizon on a uncharted journey in paint, one might only call the trek somewhat slow; the waiting for the final aesthetic to show itself it is an unusual feeling.

Plate 10.1.19 *Palm Tree*, 2004, oil on canvas, 114 cm h x 65 cm w
by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The sudden storm has darkened the sky and this has been recognized through painting prussian blue, French ultramarine and paynes grey oil traces in particular parts of the painting in Plate 10.1.19.

In Plate 10.1.19 there are also significant prussian cobalt bluish hues representing the night light as evidenced behind the middle section of the palm trunk, with the first filters of peach orange evening light fragments across what was a clear blue sky all

day. The shadows on the grass are starting to resemble a patch work quilt woven through time as nature's light constantly shifts across the motif.

Plate 10.1.20 *Palm Tree*, 2004, oil on canvas, 114 cm h x 65 cm w
by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

> *Have started painting this image again after a delay of about 8 months, due to travelling backwards and forwards from Japan and what has been learned there has changed the system of painting which is starting to bear fruit in the painting [Plate 10.1.20].*

Finally, after a substantial amount of painting, some competent painting results have started to exhibit themselves with the three images. It seems like good painting takes a long time. The image was started about two years almost to this day and has been worked on for about three to five hours today which means significant time is spent looking at what has been painted to realise from the intentions of the freshly painted marks. The system of painting is far more refined through the mixing of wax into the

oil paints and setting them out onto a palette, not so much in a strict order but with what might be needed for that session's oil traces to be well be applied. This comes no doubt from the experience of seeing and painting in Japan, especially the continual sighting of master artists from European and Japanese cultures.

Plate 10.1.21 *Palm Tree*, 2004, oil on canvas, 114 cm h x 65 cm w
by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The sky in the image is becoming difficult due to the range of hue and tones from differing time zones. It is an aesthetic that has not been common in painting before, so it is hard to get familiar with.

Due to the differing weathers and seasons that are incorporated within the painting session's oil traces, one can only hope that the range of hues painted through time will be able to help resolve the visual unfamiliarities. But, as time goes by and

sighting the painting every day, it may well become the normal way of painting one's synthesis from what is sighted in the picture plane.

Plate10.1.22 *Palm Tree*, 2004, oil on canvas, 114 cm h x 65 cm w
by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Now there is a full spectrum of hues and weathers within the images.

It is not a perfect synthesis in painting but certainly extends the path towards the calligraphic horizon and from that position in painting is satisfying. There was no expectation that the image would start to resonate *time;* rather it was an idea about painting through delay (time) and it seems to be turning out better than one had hoped for, albeit not without the myriad of frustrations that take place within one's system of praxis as, for example, the medium of wax being the right consistency each time one confronts the canvas with a fresh palette.

Plate 10.1.23 *Palm Tree*, 2004, oil on canvas, 114 cm h x 65 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Slowly over the time through delay in painting the image comes together with a full array of hue and tone that represents vision.

No doubt these paintings have been the most difficult to evolve due to the long arduous road in learning about good painting provided in Japan. But there is the sensation of vision of the omnipresent moment of memory starting to reveal itself. This one seems reasonable now, but tomorrow is another day in painting and anything can happen because no system of image making is foolproof, no matter how refined it might be in praxis.

Plate 10.1.24 *Palm Tree*, 2004, oil on canvas, 114 cm h x 65 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

This is the final painting session on these images.

I am glad they are finished as paintings although the journey in this particular synthesis of image making has only just started. It is almost as if all finished painting takes you back to the beginning of another uncertainty of what lies ahead in the next development of image making. The painting progresses further out into the horizon of a calligraphic vision in a circular fashion. Plate 10.1.25 reveals all three paintings finished in the studio in Western Australia.

Plate 10.1.25 *Studio*, 2004, digital photograph
by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The three completed paintings lined up in the studio.

What has been gleaned in knowledge from painting the palm tree will no doubt be beneficial for the rest of the chosen motifs, especially in the way it has helped a developing system of painting in praxis from the cleaning of palettes and brushes and the decision not to include another leftover day's paintings, the mixing of the paint and allowing it to dry properly. The education in Japan has been very influential in understanding good painterly surface qualities and what it takes to achieve such qualities within one's image making. There is no doubt that a progression has been

made towards the idiosyncratic calligraphic horizon and, as much, one should be happy with any small gains in painting. Yet the realisation of how far away from satisfaction with one's image is always omnipresent.

10.2 Experiment Two - Bottle Series

Plate 10.2.1 reveals how the motif was set up in Western Australia.

Plate 10.2.1 *Bottle, Ball with Mirror*, 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

In painting The Bottle, ball and mirror, there was a very big dislike in painting this motif for some reason that is actually hard to describe. It may well have been external influences at the time of the execution.

The paintings started at the beginning of the praxis (why they did is a kind of unexplainable phenomenon of memory and choice; it just happened that way), not long after the teapot and palm tree motifs and, for some reason, with this particular motif, the system of painting manifested into a desperate struggle. Though initially the choice was one of pleasure, it turned out to a serious chore to such an extent that only two were finished and one of them remained incomplete. Plates 10.2.2 to 10.2.4 exhibit the extent of the praxis that was painted with lack of inspiration from the motif.

Plate 10.2.2 *Bottle, Ball and Mirror*, 2004, oil on board, 40 cm x 30 cm by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The struggle in this painting started and ended in one session.

Plate 10.2.3 *Bottle, Ball and Mirror*, 2004, oil on board, 40 cm x 30 cm by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

There is in this image the contraction to research ideas that had been painted in 1998.

That may well have been the cause of the sudden dislike of the motif after its initial favour. Although maybe it was the third motif in this research to be painted and the calligraphic vision was not revealing itself fast enough for this research to justify continuation.

Plate 10.2.4 *Bottle, Ball and Mirror*, 2004, oil on board, 40 cm x 30 cm, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Whatever the reason for the sudden dislike of this motif, it was useful in revealing that nothing in painting is purely objective.

For delay in memory, no matter how long or short, the time between the vision and the act of painting offers ever present opportunity for other memories to influence the objectivity of a painting. This motif became an important lesson in the influence of delay upon the objective vision.

For some reason earlier research in painting that had used the bottle as the motif seems to have detracted from the praxis and therefore it tended to have the most

negative impact on the current research which lead to its cessation, even if somewhat abruptly, as its usefulness for research had diminished, if not disappeared altogether.

Chapter 11 Visual Data and Process (Japanese Landscape)

11.1 The Japanese Farm House

This particular farm is in the Ikawa Valley, a place of first contact in Japan and the flooding of the rice paddy created an interesting mirror like reflection as part of the overall motif.

Plate 11.1.1 shows the effects on the motif from an overcast day in Japan

Plate 11.1.1 *Ikawa House*, 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The motif is interesting because it allows the enormous change in the light conditions to be very apparent when painting from memory. The sky and the water in the rice paddy mirror each other through time; the farmhouse

provides a strong contrast against these two transparent surfaces. Photography is again used in painting the landscape as an aide memoire.

Plate 11.1.2 reveals the first tentative paint traces of how the light of time is remembered from the motif.

Plate 11.1.2 *Ikawa Valley Farm House*, 2004, oil on board, left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Over the next two years the image will be painted from the vision (memory) that comes back from Japan and will be revealed onto the panels from the various lights and weathers experienced from the public surfaces of nature.

There is in the picture on the right hand side mid way of the painting which is the prior image, a photograph. It is there for at least two reasons, the first being that it gives a sense of structure to the painting, not exact but because it recharges the

weaker sensations that reside in memory (vision). The second is that it lets the newer memories generate some contrast against the older ones for no two moments of time are ever the same as the experience of the present remain memory until it becomes history in some form. The experience of the moment is shaped by influence from the data of senses and reshaped again by the influence of delay. What evolves as oil traces is a far more enlarged sensation of what has been experienced. Plates 11.1.3 to 11.1.5 exhibit the development of the Ikawa Farm motif.

Plate 11.1.3 *Ikawa Valley Farm House*, 2004, oil on board, left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Slowly the painted oil traces from remembered vision start to reveal themselves.

The sky is mixed with peach industrial caramel reds and yellows from the summer months with the winter being represented by the ice tones of blue for this valley is very cold in winter. What is amazing is how the times and weathers reveal themselves through some sort of developing independent aesthetic which is only realised after studying one's paint traces on the canvas.

Plate 11.1.4 *Ikawa Valley Farm House*, 2004, oil on board, left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The sky has been softened up with a range of peach tones through which the light seeps from the industrial pollution as the sun sets.

There is a huge amount of pollution in the sky but then again it makes for some amazing blue hues as the sun sets and the nocturne takes over as evidenced in the very top of the painting and in the rice paddy.

Plate 11.1.5 *Ikawa Valley Farm House*, 2004, oil on board, left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

After returning from Japan, where the rice had grown whilst in Perth, the pool of water was no longer there, so the decision was made to shrink the time to what was encountered in late spring and in other parts of the painting continue to paint the seasons and weathers.

The realisation was that time could exist very independently in painting yet still manifest itself as a complete synthesis. The peach tones, the nocturne blues of night,

as well as the morning and afternoon day's blues are being placed in larger brush-marks in the foreground to bring the sensation of distance into play within the picture plane.

The nature of perspective and the idea of accuracy is not a concern; the building will be painted as seen fit to portray it. Plate 11.1.6 reveals the praxis developing steadily.

Plate 11.1.6 *Ikawa Valley Farm House*, 2004, oil on board, left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

One of the major problems with painting from memory (vision) is how to reconcile (as a synthesis of vision) the light coming from different directions as it falls upon the same object through time.

Sometimes the light refracting from the picture plane reveals itself in speckles of recognized hue in time and others in patches. These painterly issues are problematic not so much because of the visual recognition but how they sit on the canvas when painted to maintain a cohesive image. For instance, as the sun crosses the sky, the landscape within the picture plane and the associated hues shift dramatically. Similarly, when a large cloud projects its shadow, leaving the artist with a memory of a huge range of colours and sometimes the need to place some remembrances as a cluster of oil traces in a particular hue or just place them independently across the painted board, this presents a complex aesthetic choice. In Plate 11.1.7 these choices can be seen in the foreground as a small patch of apricot orange hues on the water refracted from the sky representing the colours of the setting sun.

Plate 11.1.7 *Ikawa Valley Farm House*, 2004, oil on board, left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The final painted image completed some 15 months later. This delay was caused by many trips to and fro from Japan through the differing seasons and light conditions. The delay was beneficial due seeing Cézanne's images first hand in Japan. For example, Paul Cézanne and how he used large brush marks to brings objects forward and small brush marks to describe his sensations of distant sightings of things with his picture plane and how they applied paint traces. Therefore, on returning to the studio in Perth, slowly but surely the system of painting became more confident in the knowledge from what had been gleaned in studying the landscape and the master artworks.

The most important idea revealed in these paintings is the journey of the idiosyncratic calligraphic vision and this is evidenced throughout the painting. For instance, in the foreground water, there are slantwise large oil traces of cerulean light blue of the midday, light mauves/crimson peaches of the nocturne approaching and some deep French ultramarine blues of the night. At the back of the pond there are smaller traces of oil reflecting the building and sky in more horizontal traces of greys, raw umbers, light purple blues of the night and ochre greens of the aging wall.

Against that, there are some long streaky marks representing the insects going across the water. This was a very strange sensation but it worked because it seems to unite the synthesis of vision as the insect creature moved from panel to panel in memory.

The Ikawa Valley Farm House as a motif has been beneficial in the way it has started to consolidate some of the gains made from developing the system in painting that was used rendering the Palm Tree series. For example, the paint traces were mixed and placed onto the canvas with a far greater surety than the tentativeness that was first used; this seemed to recede into the background whilst the actions of painting were taking place. One can only hope this important trait of calligraphic vision carries over to the next motif.

11.2 Japanese Bridge

Plate 11.2.1 illustrates a typical bridge over many of Japan's small rivers and creeks.

Plate 11.2.1 *Ikawa Bridge*, 2004 digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

This site is one of the first contact points in Japan and it made an impact visually so therefore it became a motif.

In this particular photo there is the advent of late spring, which has many fluorescent greens. The hue of the terrain around the river was an incredible sensation to experience because nothing similar exists in Australia.

Interwoven within these sensations were the memories of the dark winter soggy browns with much clearer skies unlike the atmosphere in this one which is smoggy

due the burning off of the rice paddies and the industrial wastes being pumped into the atmosphere.

The bridge is also a good motif to try and develop the system of painting thereby consolidating further knowledge in painting another unfamiliar landscape. Plates 11.2.2 to 11.2.4 exhibit the praxis through several months of painting.

Plate 11.2.2 *Ikawa Bridge*, 2004, oil on board, left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The memories of the seasons, weather and lights have started to reveal themselves. There are midway up the middle panel short yellow ochres representing autumn; down the bottom there are longish brush marks of chrome bright green tone exhibiting the new green in Japan after the winter blackish/grey/brown traces which can be evidenced up where the river bends towards the right hand side of the image.

Whilst painting the picture in Australia there are many memories of other visual sightings of the bridge from various weathers and seasons and these have to be mixed onto the palette prior to painting. Probably one of the most important things to be gleaned from Japan was examining master artworks, especially Cézanne who is important in the way his calligraphic vision extended itself constantly, albeit slowly at times, and especially the way he experimented with paint marks being large, closer and smaller in the distance as evidenced in many of his later artworks.

Plate 11.2.3 *Ikawa Bridge*, 2004, oil on board, left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The intergradations of times of light are proving difficult.

While there is a desire to focus just on the greens of summer, the visions of winter are equally strong when painting back in Australia. Oscillating between painting the differing hues of weathers and seasons, as well as experimenting with calligraphic

vision and seeing how the masters in painting achieved, does not make painting easier. On the contrary, it becomes much harder because of the way their paint marks educate one towards the demands of being a good painter. And the nearer you think you are to achieving something that is reasonable, the further it disappears into the distance making the experimentation seem almost fruitless at times. But I am not the only one to feel this sort of slow progress in painting. For example, Paul Cézanne wrote to Emile Bernard in May 12 1904 thus: "*I proceed very slowly. Nature presents itself to me in great complexity and there is much progress to be made.*" (Doran 1978: 25)

Plate 11.2.4 *Ikawa Bridge*, 2004, oil on board, left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The emerging problem in painting this memory through delay has been how to change the brush mark in the foreground of the painting, to bring the sensation of the freshly grown foliage into a convincing vision. So the obvious

had to be done to invent some sort of system that was going to get the aesthetic of the image into some sort of harmony.

This meant the system of painting had to be altered. It was an aesthetic choice because visually the image was not working. It was really nagging; pestering might be a better word as something within the image did not sit well. Therefore a different approach was tried which meant that each green from soggy moist brown greens, to ochre ripening greens towards the end of summer, the night Prussian purple blue greens had to be mixed with wax in ample quantities and placed with a large brush to bring a broader and looser sensation of something visually close. The paint was applied in calligraphic sense traces as evidenced on the three panels at the bottom of the image in Plate 11.2.5. The canvas reveals the sensations of something visually experienced at close range which has been a pleasing experiment.

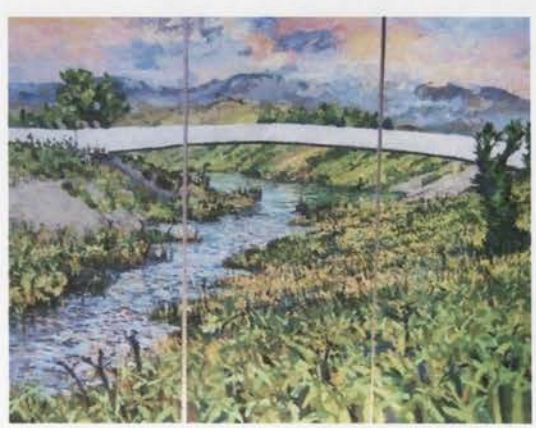

Plate 11.2.5 *Ikawa Bridge*, 2004, oil on board, left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

It has been a difficult painting to create over the months of going back to Japan and then coming back with another very alien sensation to encounter how the seasons exhibit themselves in the northern hemisphere.

It has been a long painterly journey filled with very different sensations and the need to articulate with clarity all the time. There is no doubt that there has been an increased degree of painterly difficulty but one feels that closure on the painterly journey is nearing, although not necessarily as successfully as one would like.

Good painting is hard to do. There are about twenty or so good painters in the history of art who have left benchmarks of calligraphic vision so exceptional that one can only hope for small amounts of success in a life time as a painter by comparison. What these masters have created is a path that one can follow and against which one can always measure one's achievements in painting. Hence the best measure for that is to ask whether one can do what they did in paint and this means not illustrating it but actually pushing outwards from their idiosyncratic calligraphic vision and that is the hard part. Plate 11.2.6 represents the final image with the three panels completed.

Plate 11.2.6 *Ikawa Bridge*, oil on board, left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The final image in retrospect seems like a struggle to come to terms with new visual sensations from the foliage of the new green after the winter; it was one of extraordinary contrasts and how to apply them in oil traces as a cohesive aesthetic was even harder .

The first contact with such visual sensations of foliage in Japan and how to apply them as oil traces should be difficult, for it took the Japanese Kano School of artists around 350 years to get to the position of articulating the calligraphic vision. One could hardly expect to master alien sensations so readily. For the eye hand

co-ordination of painting new sensations has been rarely used and that is the integral part of the calligraphic vision.

11.3 Cherry Blossom Tree

This particular cherry blossom tree is on the way to the shops near where I live in Seishin Chuo in western Kobe, Japan. Plate 11.3.1 exhibits the cherry blossoms near Takenodai, Japan.

Plate 11.3.1 *Cherry Blossom* digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

This Cherry Blossom tree is in full bloom. It lasts only two weeks in the beginning of April usually in Kobe, Japan. The Cherry Blossom represents the Samurai in Japanese history because they have a short beautiful life.

Each day, whilst walking past this tree on the way to the train station or shops, observations of its changes were a joy to witness. In the cold morning against a fresh cerulean sky, the magenta plum hues stood out; during the day this was not so obvious but, as the wind hit the tree, the whitish plum petals slowly fell to the ground like snow.

In the afternoon, the hues of the Cherry Blossom Tree would turn slightly peach in colour and become more contrasting against a darkling purplish bluish sky. In the nocturne the orange light of the street lamps turned the petals glowing peach white against a manganese sky. This was an interesting phenomenon to witness and one that I enjoyed painting very much. It was a sheer pleasure to paint such unusual sensations. It is not hard to see why the Japanese pay so much attention to nature in their arts as it is so aesthetically beautiful. Plates 11.3.2 to 11.3.5 show the early to mid progression of the praxis.

Plate 11.3.2 *Cherry Blossom Tree*, oil on board, left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson

This painting has been started in Perth not long after my return

As acknowledged earlier, the memories of this painting are joyous and the pleasures of walking past this painting at various intervals are wonderful. Hence to begin painting from these memories back in Perth presented no chore, especially with the system of painting now developing on a more assured path. The last two panels that had been painted in Perth presented many painting problems which, so far on this journey of image making, have been resolved. Therefore in this image more time could be spent on developing the calligraphic vision through the actions of painting which means honing that eye/ hand canvas co-ordination.

Plate 11.3.3 *Cherry Blossom Tree*, oil on board, left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson

The early painted sensations of morning, noon, afternoon and evening have dried so several other layers are now being applied. These new oil traces are of varying times of light being placed on the panels as remembered from walking past the cherry blossom; for example, the night sky has differing shades of bluish prussian hues speckled throughout the panels.

In applying other painted memories of the recognitions of light, the clarity of time becomes apparent as evidenced in Plate 11.3.3 where, in the left hand bottom corner, there are clearly the recognitions of night against the receding light of the late evening.

Plate 11.3.4 *Cherry Blossom Tree*, oil on board, left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson

In recalling memories to paint, one realizes that they are saturated with slight variations from what is being painted at the time.

These variations are cause for adjustments in the painting. For instance, the whitish cherry colour of the petals are light throughout the day, then turn to orange hues through the night; they also gently cascade to the ground when the wind blows.

Plate 11.3.5 *Cherry Blossom Tree,* oil on board, left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson

Of all the paintings so far this has been the most successful in painting outwards to the calligraphic horizon. But feeling comfortable with the painting this image has come through experimentation with the system of applying oil traces as evidenced in the Yellow Teapot, Palm Trees, Ikawa Farm House and Ikawa Bridge painted panel. It didn't just happen.

There are no doubt several painterly factors within Plate 11.3.5 contributing to what seems like the ease of painting but the reality has been far different especially since the beginnings with the teapot series. Firstly it has been the developing systems of

painting through experimentation of mixing the wax in with the oil paint and getting to an appropriately oily consistency where it does not run too much and then applying onto the canvas or panels. More importantly, it has been consistently going back to Japan to confront the alien sensations and learning how to articulate them as oil traces on panels thus extending one's knowledge outwards towards the calligraphic horizon. Plates 11.3.6 to 11.3.8 show the mid to final stages of painting this motif.

Plate 11.3.6 *Cherry Blossom Tree*, oil on board, left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson

Memories of the strong wind in the Japanese spring have reduced the number of petals on the tree. They are blowing through the air like snow; it is an incredibly beautiful sight.

The changing amount of petals has made the painting look more skeletal but other memories of the tree in fuller bloom now seem to take precedence over the remembrances of the wind's carnage on the petals.

How to reconcile the memories that are taking place in Perth with the events of the Japanese spring is being responded to in a painterly arbitrary fashion because of the delay in time and how nothing can be exact because each moment is different and memory will always be recalled from its original moment with diminishing returns. This is not a dissimilar solution to the way Paul Cézanne resolved where the edges of his objects were seen from the motif. For example, in many of Cézanne's artworks, there are several traces of bluish hues representing the edge of something seen for he was unable to reconcile within the exact edge of a chosen motif because he knew memory was not so precise.

Plate 11.3.7 *Cherry Blossom Tree,* oil on board, left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson

Every day there is a remixing of slight variations of blues, purple light blues, magentas, manganese and Prussian hues to represent the differing light conditions of what has been remembered.

It is crucial that all underpainting is dry. There is no way I want to mix other sensations of remembrances of light with what has completed so far in the journey of painting.

Plate 11.3.8 *Cherry Blossom Tree*, oil on board, left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson

The final image of the Cherry Blossom Tree and yes I did enjoy this painting. It was a visual feast and treat to indulge oneself reflectively in one of Japan's iconic motifs as it revealed itself through morning, noon, afternoon and evening lights. It is something that no doubt I will pursue again in the not too distant future. The visit to Cherry Blossom festival at Akashi castle made sure that future journeys would occur.

Chapter 12 Japanese Visual Data and Process: Still Life

12.1 The Aquarium

This motif has been chosen for several reasons even though it was not one of the original motifs (see Table 7.8.1). During the research it seemed that it might be an interesting painting idea due to the visual flux of my movement and the continual movements of the fish; hence the goldfish fitted perfectly into the research to extend what might happen outwards in the journey of the calligraphic vision

Plate 12.1.1 presents the goldfish swimming in an aquarium although unfortunately they did not survive for more than two days.

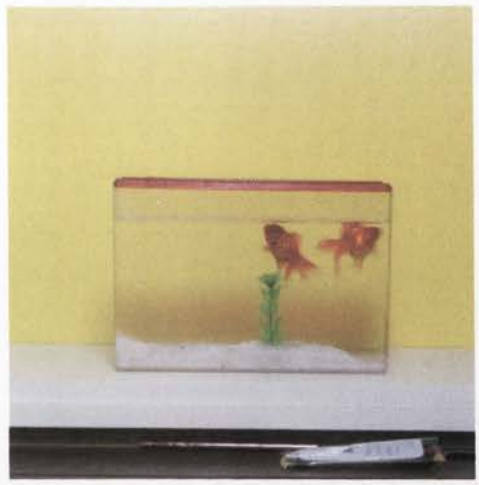

Plate 12.1.1 *Goldfish*, digital photograph – August 2004 by Peter Davidson

As the system of painting in the praxis has developed some way since the earlier still life of the yellow teapot, there is now a growing confidence that each day's paintings will bring further realisations, (although maybe not great advancements) but nonetheless extend the calligraphic horizon. Hence this is why the next series of paintings are in existence because they may well allow the research to have a reasonable satisfactory point genuinely extending the idiosyncratic calligraphic horizon.

The light in the studio is virtually museum quality and very controlled; it does not shift unless one brings another lamp into the small painting space. So the visual flux between two living identities myself/the fish and how that will reveal itself as an image creates the interest.

The omnipresent humidity of Japan is a very tiring environment in which to draw. Consistently therefore, after five weeks, it was necessary to seek refuge from it through painting the goldfish. Painting now has not only become a conceptual idea about visual flux and delay but essentially it was becoming essential to get out of the sun in Japan.

Another principle that has emerged is the nature of truth in vision. For instance, the aesthetic painting traditions (form, perspective, etc...) that alter the reality of what might be actually experienced is enhanced by the movement of the fish. For instance, recently having seen the work of Jonannes Vermeer van Delft in the painting *Die Malkunst* at the Kobe Museum in July 2004, his vision (memory) of the socks on the artist's legs within the picture presented a stunning moment of memory (vision) painted and how that imagery has transcended time and space in oil painting is a kind of phenomenon that rarely presents itself. Vermeer's vision is unique and encapsulates someone using the traditions of painting to create their own synthesis in vision, so the further he moved away from the tradition in painting, the more he sought his own nature of visual truth. Plate 12.1.2 exhibits the early stages of painting the aquarium.

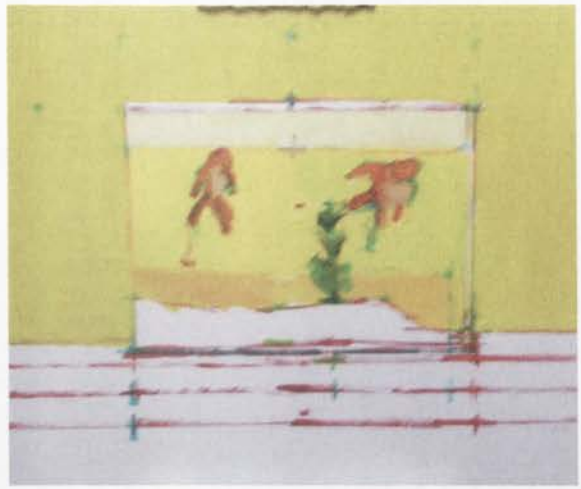

Plate 12.1.2 *Goldfish*, acrylic on board, 32 cm h x 41 cm w by Peter Davidson

The separation of the yellow hues between the clear plastic aquarium and the direct vision of the background yellows is difficult to render because water dulls the yellows. Hence making the proper way to render the sensation that has been received by the eye becomes crucial.

The markings in viridian and cadmium red with a thin soft brush are more or less where vision (memory) registered across the picture plane (what one might call the matrix of the painted idea) and then moves around to survey further sensations that have been sensed. The red traces of paint (matrix marks) accentuate the delay in painting by marking a very deliberate moment.

Third session the colour of the background in separation from the aquarium is proving hard to do and the resolution of the foreground is something that needs thinking about. The use of acrylics in Japan has been very useful for it allows the painting of motifs far more quickly that the slow drying of oils.

Using acrylics has revealed so far that immediate delay in memory (vision) influences the *now* in painting just as much as thoughts that intrude from many years ago. So sometimes thoughts and moods sweep over the temperament of the painter whilst in the activity of painting and no doubt have an effect. These painterly temperaments may cause the artist to stop painting or, as evidenced in Plate 11.3.8, the Cherry Blossom Tree where it was sheer joy to paint at times. Plates 12.1.3 to Plate 12 1.5 exhibit the progression of the paint traces as rendered from the motif.

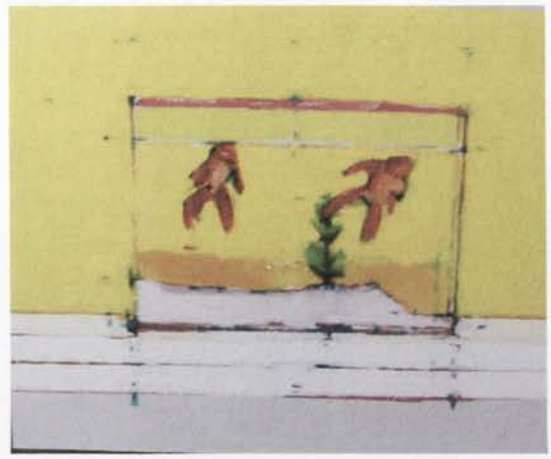

Plate 12.1.3 *Goldfish*, acrylic on board, 32 cm h x 41 cm w
by Peter Davidson

Painting the two fish in their iridescent colours as they flicker around the aquarium has been extraordinarily difficult and having the yellow background amongst my own personal flux of vision, along with the fish's constant movements, has made it no easier and who said painting goldfish is easy.

The quick drying acrylic paint has made a difficult painting situation a lot easier to work through as its small but very influential issues in vision can be solved more quickly; for example, the rendering of the sighted hues on the public surfaces of the fish as they move through the aquarium. Using a fast drying system of painting made it easier to resolve the flux of the fish in the aquarium. Even though any construction of them was going to be arbitrary, traces of paint could be laid down quickly with

very little delay and, in some ways, this added presence to the fish, even though they appeared seemingly deformed.

Plate 12.1.4 *Goldfish,* acrylic on board, 32 cm h x 41 cm w by Peter Davidson

> *One of the fish has died but, like all adversaries, one must look to the system of painting to overcome the obstacle of part absence in the motif. Getting another fish may well try and recreate the former memory but what is the point because time has moved on and so has memory; therefore it is better to manage with the initial memories in painting the image.*

Using delayed memory (vision) is the advantage of painting objectively because the influence of vision from sighting the fish through earlier times allows that memory (vision) to reveal itself. Even if obviously distorted!

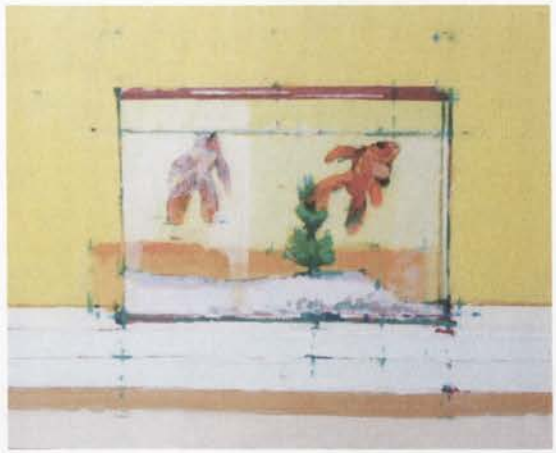

Plate 12.1.5 *Goldfish*, acrylic on board, 32 cm h x 41 cm w by Peter Davidson

Have just finished painting the reflections on the tank.

Having painted the reflections on the fish tank within the picture plane has helped unify the image through the influence of the natural reflection on the glass aquarium that allows the eye to rationalise the presence of external sensations thus creating a presence. The yellow ochre strip at the front in the next painting session may be toned down to shift the focus to the aquarium as there seems to be a tension of vision (memories) between the two hues. Plate 12.1.6 is the final image in this painting study of the Aquarium.

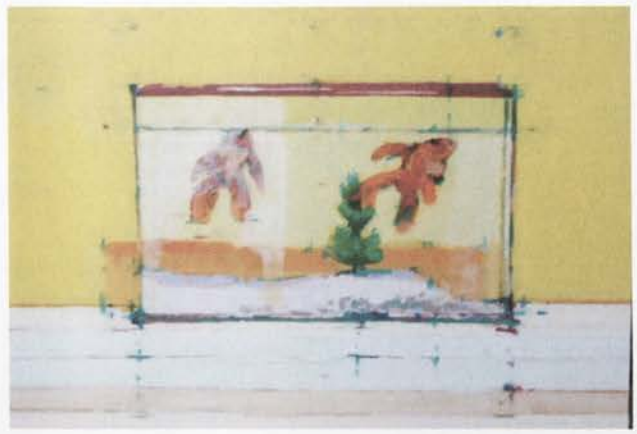

Plate 12.1.6 *Goldfish,* acrylic on board, 32 cm h x 41 cm w by Peter Davidson

Have finished the painting today, I wish I could be so sure about everything in painting but most of the time I feel less sure; unnerving as that is, it's true.

The motif reveals some painterly issues, one being that sometimes being a prisoner to the trained aesthetic memories is not always adversarial if integrated with a new system of painting to accommodate an idiosyncratic synthesis. This can be evidenced by the way the table meets the yellow background; there is a small strip of orange yellow where the under-painted vision comes through, not through deliberate intention but because the last vision of the painted yellow background did not reach the white table.

The edge between the yellow background and white table would normally, if painted in the traditional sense, coalesce but, because natural vision and the act of painting

create a gap that lets the underpainting exhibit itself, this created another aesthetic that works within the whole painting. Then there is a joining of the old underpainting technique and the new over painted system to create a cohesive image.

12.2 Red Pear

Plate 12.2.1 represents a motif constructed from cheap objects purchased from a 100-yen shop in Japan and as indicated in Table 7.8.1 it adds an extra motif to the research.

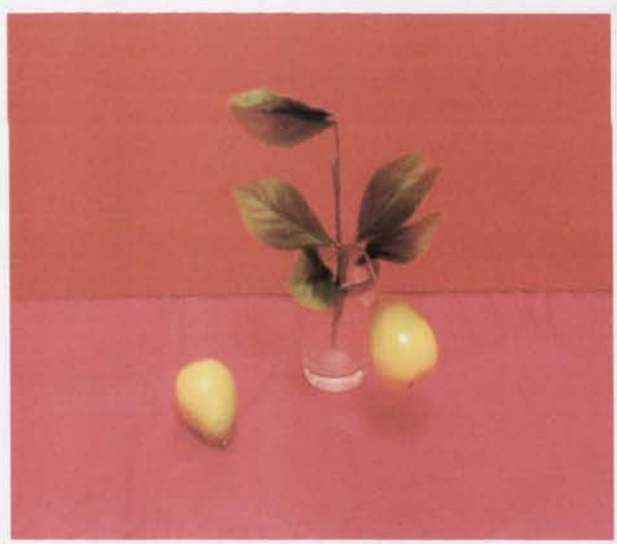

Plate 12.2.1 *Red Pear*, Digital Photograph by Peter Davidson

The Red Pear wasn't part of the methodology but came into the research due to the nature of the way the idiosyncratic calligraphic vision praxis was

developing especially the system of painting with acrylic which allowed more experiments to be done from things that were seen and generated new ideas.

The motif has been chosen because of the intensity of hue that comes from using predominately red and pinkish background coloured cardboard. The leaves are of imitation plastic representing a pear tree strategically placed in a large glass with a magenta transparent top that was bought from the 100-yen shop.

I have really enjoyed setting up this still life. It could be the sensations of colour that attract the most and this is interrupted by the abstract looking pear tree. Shopping in the 100-yen shop is fascinating because of one's phenomenon of aesthetic taste which starts to come into the purchase and the motif for what might make an interesting painting. Plates 12.2.2 – 12.2.4 exhibit how the improved system of painting is bringing results.

Plate 12.2.2 *Red Pear*, acrylic on board, 32 cm h x 41 cm w by Peter Davidson

The first acrylic traces of cadmium red hue are now placed upon the canvas, along with the leaves and the plastic pears, with some of the markings mapping the vision as it roamed over the picture plane from the motif. These acrylic traces represent points of sighted reference that mark out the time and space of objects or edges loosely connecting with one or another through vision.

There is no intention to be exact in perspective, form or tone but there is the desire to gain a close recall of vision using the influence of delay from what has been sighted in the day's paintings. It is not to dispense with the taught traditions of paintings but to use them in a kind of way that fits in with one's aesthetic and this is the hard part of the painting - to know how and when these decisions are made within any image being constructed.

Plate 12.2.3 *Red Pear*, acrylic on board, 32 cm h x 41 cm w by Peter Davidson

There is another set of markings in a sort of light emerald green bluish tones, that adjust memory (vision) but not traditional accuracy. This has been an interesting development in the notion of adjusting memory.

Following on from the last statement regarding Plate 12.2.2 about choices in the construction of an image, it may well be called the adjustment of memory (vision) which is more about how, in painting from the motif, a certain personal visual accuracy comes into play which has less to do with the traditions of painting than with how one's idiosyncratic vision reveals the motif during the activity of painting.

Plate 12.2.4 *Red Pear*, acrylic on board, 32 cm h x 41 cm w by Peter Davidson

The shift markings have or may signify an adjustment of memory (vision) from the original matrix traces and reflect first contact with the remembrances from the motif to the surface of the canvas.

This realization only occurred through a chance encounter in Japan with Cezanne's Portrait of Vollard. Within the painting on the right hand side of the suit coat and the waist coat, not far below the bow tie, there are two navy blue horizontal markings about an inch long and two millimetres apart representing not a measuring in the traditional sense but an adjustment of his sensation from vision (memory). This has been an important find because, often in my painting, there is an adjustment of a memory (vision) and it is always going to happen because of the visual nature of flux and time. If anything, seeing Cézanne's painting reassures one that the system being used now in painting is an appropriate journey of discovery through what can be realised in painting.

Plate 12.2.5 represents the final image of the Red Pear motif.

Plate 12.2.5 *Red Pear*, acrylic on board, 32 cm h x 41 cm w by Peter Davidson

This has been a particularly pleasurable image to paint due to the nature of what was realised from the image making. It's nice to make short progressions forward in personal realisations.

The realisations gleaned from this motif have been productive especially the shifting markings representing an ongoing visual saga of the way perspective shifts through vision; given this, at some point, the artist must take an arbitrary stance on what the final painted vision might be as evidenced here in the Red Pear.

12.3 Flower Still Life

As the system of painting is now developing far more quickly than at any other time within the research, the need for further motifs was apparent and Plate 12.3.1 shows another collection of purchased objects from the 100 yen shop that appealed to my aesthetic and offered further extension of the research motifs as recorded in Table 7.8.1.

Plate 12.3.1 *Flower Painting,* Digital Photograph by Peter Davidson

The aesthetic of the public surfaces of these objects is very pleasurable to paint. Why these colours are enjoyable is a phenomenon which is somewhat inexplicable. It may be as simple as the fact that one might just enjoy the sensations of something as showy as plastic goods from a 100-yen shop.

Plates 12.3.2 to 12.3.5 show the development in painting the flower motif.

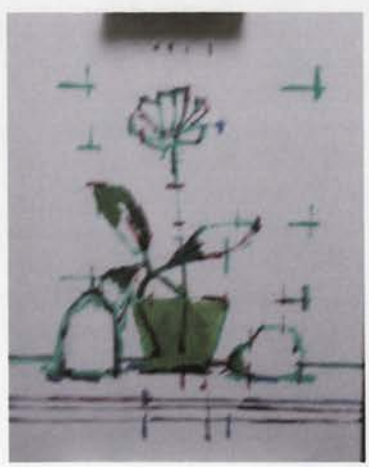

Plate 12.3.2 *Flower Painting*, acrylic on board, 32 cm h x 41 cm w by Peter Davidson.

The acrylic paint traces have been placed on to the canvas as the eye has sighted particular areas of the motif and the hues of these marks are in turquoise, magenta and French ultramarine. The still life is in very static controlled light conditions in this small studio in Japan.

There is no doubt that memory and painting have their own arbitrary conclusions and these resolve themselves through space and time in the act of painting. For example, in mixing the paint with the retarder medium on the palette, these moments are known as *delay,* which is a significant time between the idea and the action of placing a mark on the canvas. *Delay* travels through time and space; within those moments other thoughts influence the action of painting and, at times, these thoughts during delay may well create intentions in the placement of paint that are arbitrary.

Plate.12.3.3 *Flower Painting,* acrylic on board, 32 cm h x 41 cm w by Peter Davidson

The background mauve hue has been placed extremely flatly. It may well be that the influence of Japanese woodblock prints has now had a significant influence on the system.

Without doubt Japanese woodblock prints have influenced the painting as evidenced in the flat background. This is especially so in the shadowless quality within the image and how the presence of objects still commands attention through the size of the brush marks as the larger traces are at the bottom of the picture and smaller ones further back and higher up the canvas. However, this is not always the case; at times it was the other way round depending on where Cézanne placed leaves/branches with the canvas. This idea of creating presence was researched when studying Cézanne's painting at the Bridgestone Gallery in Tokyo.

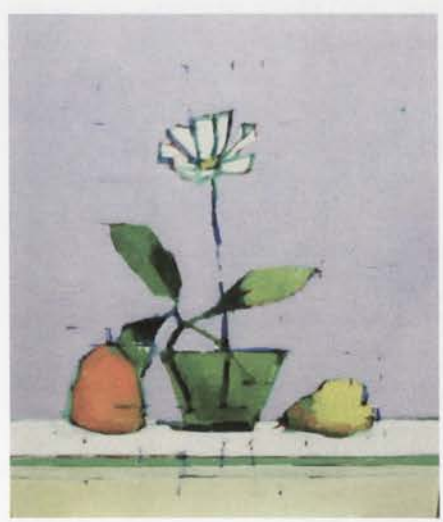

Plate 12.3.4 *Flower Painting*, acrylic on board, 32 cm h x 41 cm w by Peter Davidson

The image is slowly revealing a kind of personal synthesis of image making through a developing system of painting. Creating several extra motifs for the research has allowed the developing praxis to become more fluent as remembrances from the motif mixed onto the palette are placed onto canvas.

The developing system of painting has now become almost like second nature in application of the paint traces nature (meaning almost unconsciously as in driving along a road on auto pilot). There is a kind of accuracy in the paint traces that represents a particular moment which has nothing to do with accuracy *per se* in using the traditions of perspective but more to do with the journey towards my own vision (sensations). The colours in this motif are quite wonderful and the quirky nature of the motif also intrigues so there is a particular happiness in painting these objects. This particular type of canvas has not been used before; it is different in that it has no canvas like grain but is covered in a soft paper on hard board, unusual but definitely worth persisting with in painting mainly to see what might happen in the painting experiments. I think it may be intended for traditional Japanese charcoal watercolours.

Plate 12.3.5 *Flower Painting*, acrylic on board, 32 cm h x 41 cm w by Peter Davidson

Today the background hue of purple has been repainted.

There was some frustration with the background hue of the image. It seemed to have changed a little which may have been due to the acrylic paints. The painting's surface qualities with using the retarder medium in the acrylic paint have become interesting and give an enhanced presence to the image overall. It has moved a small extent outwards from the initial painting idea but is good and pleasing.

Plate 12.3.6 exhibits the painting progressing competently towards a calligraphic horizon.

Plate 12.3.6 *Flower Painting*, acrylic on board, 32 cm h x 41 cm w by Peter Davidson

Repainted the background and the white table the objects rest upon, after seeing Cézanne's portrait painting of Vollard and the demands of good painting; this has a lot to do with surface qualities in image making.

The determination of many sittings of Vollard for Cézanne to render the whole painting as a cohesive memory of an object structurally complete through the recognition of hue was enlightening to witness. The density of paint Cézanne used in the surface traces was inspiring. The oil marks that represent Vollard were placed independently and in relationship to each other. Plate 12.3.7 is the final image of the current motif.

Plate 12.3.7 *Flower Painting,* acrylic on board, 32 cm h x 41 cm w by Peter Davidson

This is the final image after some small adjustments to the hues on glass.

The demands of painting well are insatiable or, as the master artist Cézanne is quoted as having written in a letter on September twenty first, 1906, "Shall I ever reach the goal so eagerly sought and so long pursued?" (Read, 1952: 28)

Chapter 13 Japanese Visual Data and Process: Landscape II

13.1 Minami Blue House

Due to the successful progression in the system of painting, as discussed in Table 7.8.1, extension of the research was deemed necessary. Plate 13.1.1 illustrates the motif in the Seishin Minami Valley

Plate 13.1.1 *Minami House,* 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson

The rice is maturing and, over the past few months, it has ranged from emerald green to ripening green yellow tone. What appealed was this house's colour against the rice paddy and the dark hillside vegetation behind, surrounded by old ceramic red clay glazed roof; this

particular part of the valley is very old. Photography has played an essential role in these images as an aide mémoire (as it has for most of the image in Seishin Minami) to trigger the remembrances from differing times when I have walked around the site.

Plates 13.1.2 to 13.1.4 exhibit the progression of painting the Minami Blue House.

Plate 13.1.2 *Minami Blue House*, 2004, acrylic on arches paper, 41cm h x 32 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Today I have started painting the remembrances of the blue house.

Due to the delay in memory from the site to the canvas, a number of visual recollections whilst painting, such as the remembrances of shifting light over the landscape and the changes in seasons that have now been accommodated within the

painting The strange blue coloured wall now has greyish pale cerulean blues from sighting the declining illumination caused by the night taking over the day.

Plate 13.1.3 *Minami Blue House,* 2004, acrylic on arches paper, 41cm h x 32 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

> *The light shifts dramatically across the rice paddies as with the setting sun, memories of winter and autumn intertwine. These recognitions of light set new challenges for the calligraphic vision because, in some way, one has to devise an aesthetic, and moving out into uncharted terrains in paint across the canvas is difficult.*

In painting the blue house the memories that flooded back were included within the painting, for instance the browns of the rice paddies in winter and the yellows of the autumn sun on the back ground trees. It is these idiosyncratic traits of vision and the developing system of painting that provide a fertile ground for the calligraphic

horizon to extend in painting although rendering the paint to your notion of success as an aesthetic is difficult.

Plate 13.1.4 *Minami Blue House*, 2004, acrylic on arches paper, 41cm h x 32 cm w by Peter Davidson.

When painting with delay from memory it's strange to see how things exist against other memories such as the blue in the house.

When these sensations intersect whilst painting, all one can hope for is that the final image comes out with some visual cohesion as a memory. There is never any absolute guarantee that the painting will be successful but one must work on the image to reach some sort of arbitrary conclusion. These experiments provide some answers for certain realisations gleaned from studying the paint marks and, as the system of painting now achieves better results on a daily basis, then one can be

happier with what is happening within the research, insofar as it is moving outwards towards the calligraphic horizon.

13.2 Seishin Minami Valley

Plate 13.2.1 reveals the landscape motif in the Seishin Minami Valley.

Plate 13.2.1 *Seishin Minami Valley,* 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson

Having drawn down in the *Seishin* Minami Valley for some time, there is an interesting play of light when the sun goes across the terrain and finally settles in the west. This is especially so when the rice is maturing and the greens are luminous. Intertwine this with memories of autumn and winter and then the images become

filled with a myriad of hues and subtle tones that reveal themselves through the process of delay in painting back in the small studio in Kobe.

Plates 13.2.2 to 13.2.4 demonstrate the growing confidence with the current system of painting.

Plate 13.2.2 *Seishin Minami Valley*, 2004, acrylic on arches paper 26 cm w x 24 cm h by Peter Davidson

Having the photograph helps jog the memory (vision) because it strengthens the original vision of time. This is not about one moment but multiple moments of time when visiting the terrain of Seishin Minami. At the moment it is typhoon time and the weather changes from unbearably cloudy humid conditions to sunny and windy yet these are quite reasonable conditions in which to draw.

The system of painting (using acrylic with retarder medium and applied with the softer brushes) has now become fluent in application which is a successful outcome from these extra experiments within the research. The traces of acrylic paint seen in Plate 13.2.2 are clear in application and have a stronger sense of purpose, which resonates from remembrances in sighting the motif though time.

Plate 13.2.3 *Seishin Minami Valley*, 2004, acrylic on arches paper 26 cm w x 24 cm h by Peter Davidson

The memory that strikes me most in relation to this particular motif is how dark the shadows become as the day progresses into evening. The terre verte Prussian blues with the burnt, raw sienna umbers of winter integrate with the fluorescent emerald greens of the summer's rice crop; it is a visually weird experience to one coming from Australia.

Hard aesthetic issues evolve as one tries to paint the light cascading across the bright emerald green rice paddies with the purple mauves, burnt sienna and greys of the approaching night intertwining with the daylight paint traces; it just makes it harder.

Plate 13.2.4 *Seishin Minami Valley*, acrylic on arches paper 26 cm w x 24 cm h by Peter Davidson

As the night light takes over the daylight, the foliage under the trees is very dark indeed and this sits next to the emerald greens of the midday Japan sun that are doused with the flickering light of the late winter's evening orange Indian red browns reflecting the end of the day's winter light. The acrylic painting system that is being used in Japan really is getting the vision down from delay much better than I anticipated.

These supplementary painting experiments have not only developed the system of painting further but now the aesthetic and what can be realised is moving surely towards new horizons in painting.

Plate 13.2.5 presents the painted motif as a final image on canvas.

Plate 13.2.5 *Seishin Minami Valley*, 2004, acrylic on arches paper 26 cm w x 24 cm h by Peter Davidson

After observing the landscape during the day, the rice paddies become very electric in colour as the evening light hits the tops of the maturing rice. The hillside becomes intensely dark and then the memories of Autumn start to intercede through delay with the peach brown tones of the bamboo trees and other deciduous trees forging themselves into the painted picture plane.

The painting system is becoming second nature, revealing the remembrances on to the paper more succinctly as the calligraphic journey extends outwards. While this kind of image making may look easy, the journey towards the calligraphic horizon is neither a bitumen road nor a track; it is not even on the map. It a self-creating journey where the paint traces from the system as painting created imagery through the *delay* from remembrances thus becoming a near as can be an instantaneous record of a vision (memory) not yet revealed until they are applied to the canvas and with no end in sight.

Like all painted visions throughout the history of art, each takes a long time to achieve some sort of fruition. Nothing comes with consummate ease; no one is born with natural talent; memory is taught, how it is taught being the key to the journey.

13.3 Minami Farm House

Plate 13.3.1 exhibits part of the farm house in the Minami Valley.

Plate 13.3.1 *Minami House* 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson

As the system of painting is progressing well so far, this painting will be an experiment in using acrylic on paper. The delay of memory from sighting the motif in the picture plane and photography as an *aide memoir*e in the studio will be an extension of the system of painting that is being used enhancing further the store house of traces and marks that beacon on the calligraphic horizon. Delay in this case of painting has been somewhat enforced by the weather here which has included stifling humidity and impending typhoons.

Plates 13.2.2 to 13.2.5 exhibit the painting's progression from the motif.

Plate 13.3.2 *Minami House,* 2004, acrylic on arches paper 26.5 cm h x 24 cm w by Peter Davidson

The acrylic system of painting has made some marked gains in how traces are applied with speed and, due to the drying time being vastly quicker than oils, it allows further experimentation with traces that resonate from remembrances of the motif.

Some of the marks, like the red magenta traces, are more or less matrix marks where some remembrance has take place within the motif and other traces are developed around them, not necessarily in a predetermined order but painted ubiquitously across the paper until the randomness of traces comes together as a cohesive image.

Plate 13.3.3 *Minami House,* 2004, acrylic on arches paper 26.5 cm h x 24 cm w by Peter Davidson

As it is early summer the paint is drying extra quickly even with retarder medium applied and, as a result, the time between sessions is not so long. This seems to be one of the major benefits of using the acrylic medium on paper in that the delay in vision is somehow enhanced through the shortening of time.

The more one paints using the influence of delay, the more time itself in the form of the colours that the eye sees on the public surfaces allows itself to be revealed within the image. This allows visions from other seasons to occur also.

The nature of traditional accuracies within the taught methodologies of painting tends to become less and less relevant as delay and influence start to dominate the painting.

Plate 13.3.4 *Minami House,* 2004 acrylic on arches paper 26.5 cm h x 24 cm w by Peter Davidson

As the painting proceeds, the remembrances of winter hues and tones start to influence the painting and as much as these traces from another season of year are placed on the canvas, they're not consciously thought of in the original idea. They just tend to appear through the action of painting with delay.

Delay in painting brings so many differing memories when one is rendering paint traces and the way these remembrances are painted is very arbitrary and has much to do with one's aesthetic.

Plate 13.3.5 *Minami House*, 2004 acrylic on arches paper 26.5 cm h x 24 cm w by Peter Davidson

As the system of painting hones itself from memory (vision) the ease at the mixing of tones becomes easier through the praxis.

The relationship between what is seen on the canvas, the palette along with the *aide memoire* (photograph) and how the actions of the hands holding the brushes mix the paint on the palette has become almost second nature. The benefit of shifting to acrylic in Japan with the soft brushes, artist quality acrylic paint and the retarder

medium has been much greater than expected. The traces from the soft brushes are applied with greater sensitivity to the demands of encompassing the remembrances on the canvas which is important for the intentionalities of the paint marks resonating with the theory of the artist as one views the image.

Plate 13.3.6 is the final image painted from the Minami House motif.

Plate 13 .3.6 *Minami House,* 2004, acrylic on arches paper 26.5 cm h x 24 cm w by Peter Davidson

The painting is finished. These are small scale paintings because I wanted to see if the vision (memory) could be accomplished as successfully on paper as on hard board. So far the experience has proved to be a bonus. For some reason, when using acrylic on arches 300lb paper, this seems to be a surface that allows the vision to get down more succinctly from memory with a slightly more unified feel about it; maybe

this is due to the absorption of paint and water into the paper. With oil on board or canvas, there seems to be a distinct separation between the medium and painting the material so that separate memories emerge when one views the ultimate image. Apart from the system developing in these paintings, the nature of delay nevertheless plays an important part in the praxis because time alone seems to free one from the constraints of historical painting techniques.

13.4 Minami Rice Paddies

Plate 13.4.1 exhibits the new green in the Minami Valley and it is another new motif as recorded in Table 7.8.1.

Plate 13.4.1 *Minami Rice Paddies*, 2004, acrylic on arches paper 27 cm h x 24 cm w by Peter Davidson

The weather has been hot and oppressive to say the least; I have a severe cold and feel absolutely awful but push on. I particularly liked this view because it looks like a golf link with bonsai trees but it is really rice paddies and a farmer's house. The emerald green of the rice paddies is really stunning but again the remembrances of winter and spring infiltrate the current thoughts.

Plates 13.4.2 to 13.4.3 exhibit the development of the painting in rendering the new green in the valley.

Plate 13.4.2 *Minami Rice Paddies,* 2004 acrylic on arches paper 27 cm h x 24 cm w by Peter Davidson

The cold in my head has lingered and so have the heat and both impact on the progress of the painting

Plate 13.4.3 *Minami Rice Paddies,* 2004, acrylic on arches paper 27 cm h x 24 cm w by Peter Davidson

The heat and cold still linger on.

Whilst resting, there is the time to reflect on certain issues when viewing the painting. What comes out of these paintings, more than anything so far, is the beauty of the Japanese landscape and, strangely enough, painting it through time allows fuller spectra of the landscape's illuminated hues to appear within one's image. Plate 13.4.4 exhibits the rapid progression of the praxis.

Plate 13.4.4 *Minami Rice Paddies*, 2004, acrylic on arches paper 27 cm h x 24 cm w by Peter Davidson

This image is finished and now that the system of painting is continually refining itself through thought and action (painting, images come more freely than in the earlier part of the research praxis and that is a relief. One would dread no real advancement towards the idiosyncratic horizon in painting.

The memories of autumn and winter come flooding into the process of painting with delay, along with the visions of the winter's chill sky tinged with the salmon pinks of summer merging across the picture plane. Japan is a fantastic place in which to paint as the seasons change so dramatically compared to Western Australia. The way the emerald green maturing rice sits next to the burnt - raw siennas of the barren cold winter is inspirational to see.

Sitting in the rice paddies is one of the few times you get to be by yourself in a flat plain which is an unusual experience here. The bamboo that sits on the hillside amongst the Japanese trees has a very dark Prussian blue shadow underneath it because the vegetation is very dense.

13.5 Minami Sienna House

Plate 13.5.1 illustrates an old farm house in the Minami Valley and is another new motif as introduced in Table 7.8.1.

Plate 13.5.1 *Minami Sienna House*, 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson

These houses tend to fit into the aesthetic of place and the process of making the ceramic roof is to be admired. However in this photograph the way in which the grey greens of the rice paddies with a range of rustic raw umber timber browns of the house are aesthetically constructed creates an interesting motif.

There is a pedestrian kind of beauty in local semi rural terrain around Minami. Integrated with the old architecture around the rice paddies, there is modern architecture which is a bit harder to reconcile with one's aesthetic. Plates 13.5.2 to 13.5.6 exhibit the progression of the painting praxis to the final image.

Plate 13.5.2 *Minami Sienna House,* 2004 acrylic on arches paper 27 cm h x 24 cm w by Peter Davidson

The painting is becoming a difficult task to paint especially getting the memory (vision) of the house right as to what I think it should be.

The problem seems to be more to with what *I think it should be* than what *I realise it could be.* This is always going to be a problem in painting as it is juxtaposition of these two key phrases in painting that continually nag at one. Thinking of what it should be is in line with the traditions of painting but means that the image has very little real substance, other than that it illustrates some tradition in painting, such as portraiture.

Realisation in painting is about experimentation in one's praxis and realising from the traces, something that one has discovered from the image. This is not easy to do; it is hard but necessary.

Plate 13.5.3 *Minami Sienna House*, 2004 acrylic on arches paper 27 cm h x 24 cm w by Peter Davidson

One of the many typhoons that has occurred this summer is making its presence felt in the way the clouds move quickly across the picture plane and can be only recorded in a few traces of paint. To paint the clouds in the traditional mannerism of painting would kill the painting.

The traditional mannerism of rendering clouds would deconstruct the personal synthesis that has been painted throughout this research, regardless of the paint qualities within the image. Painting with one's synthesis of vision (remembrances) surrenders the idiosyncratic image if the system is sufficiently developed. Therefore, within Plate 13.5.4, contraction to the tradition will not reveal the idiosyncratic trait with one's painting but revert to the collective taught aesthetic of the past.

Plate 13.5.4 *Minami Sienna House*, 2004, acrylic on arches paper 27 cm h x 24 cm w by Peter Davidson

The house is becoming a major painting problem because of the way time and delay work across the picture plane with the myriad of hues that are within the vision.

For instance, if daytime hues are rendered sitting next to the brownish mauves of the approaching night, then the illumination of the street light is overlain and interspersed throughout the painting. Hence a highly ruptured effect exhibits itself on the house regarding a compromise in the aesthetic of this painting problem.

Plate 13.5.5 *Minami Sienna House,* 2004, acrylic on arches paper 27 cm h x 24 cm w by Peter Davidson

The compromise has been the rendering of the house wall in softer hues of browns which have been painted over the night traces of prior sessions.

One can be absolutely dogmatic about painting a theory as Cézanne is quoted as saying: "*I have never desired and I shall never accept the absence of modelling or of gradation*" (Read 1952: 35) but, in the end, one may well not learn as much as one could through concession, with the arbitrary use of tradition within one's painting for the overall aesthetic of the image.

Plate 13.5.6 *Minami Sienna House*, 2004, acrylic on arches paper 27 cm h x 24 cm w by Peter Davidson

The compromise for the aesthetic [see Plate 13.5.5] *was necessary because one felt the painting to be a more cohesive image.*

There is no doubt that any sort of dogma is going to hamper one's learning and, as much as Cézanne was a great painter, by his own admission he knew that his own realisations surrendered themselves slowly.

It has been beneficial to paint the extra landscapes for the research and important from the point of view that it has helped the system become second nature from the vision (remembrances) and these ongoing thoughts into action (traces on the arches paper) with each subsequent realisation. The nature of dogma in painting (in the way it reveals itself as evidenced in Cézanne or Reynolds) will not allow progression to the calligraphic horizon with any ease.

Chapter 14 Exhibitions: Japan and Australia

14.1 The Exhibitions

As the praxis was completed, the focus then turned to exhibiting the painting research in both Japan and Australia. This decision in itself created a myriad of problems, such the choice of gallery, transporting artworks safely across state and global boundaries, abiding by international laws to exhibit in foreign countries, plus the arrangement of the exhibition itself, issues which will be discussed in subsequent sections.

14.2 Gaining access in Japan

Once having dealt with the immigration issues, the issue of transporting the artworks to Japan remained. Ultimately this was achieved by buying an old suitcase and, as the works were smallish, comprising twelve artworks (44 cm h x 34 cm) and eight paintings (44 cm x 19 cm), they could be accommodated therein. Others could be stored in the overhead locker of the plane to reduce the transport costs of the work. These details seem insignificant but the cost of freighting work to Japan is

extraordinarily expensive and, if it is possible to pack the bulk into airline luggage, this is to be recommended.

The work was bought from Perth through Tokyo Airport, where I explained at immigration that the paintings were to be part of a lecture, as evidence that I was complying with Japanese immigration regulations

The invitation for the exhibition (see Appendix A.1) was written in both English and Japanese. Accurate translation is hard because of the different meanings within cultures and attitudes towards words and actions so that what one actually means is hard to attain in terms of an exact representation of communication. The invitation were sent mainly to Tomoko's family and friends as I had just arrived in Japan that year and did not have many contacts.

14.3 The Exhibition Horikawa Gallery

The exhibition was held over five days (a typical time scale in Japanese commercial galleries). Everyone who enters such establishments receives a formal Japanese bow, which is very important for it shows serious respect for the person entering the gallery. Japanese formalities and acts of courtesy means are still very much part of

culture and failure in observing that one ends up not doing any business. Each person who enters the gallery signs a guest book, which the artist then keeps both as a record and in order to send a thank you card to each guest in appreciation for coming to the show. Not fluent in the Japanese language, my friend proceeded to send the cards, which totalled one hundred and fifty approximately.

As required by immigration law, the lecture was presented at the Horikawa Gallery in front of an audience of about eight people. There is no stipulation by immigration of numbers in attendance at the lecture, only that it has to be executed. The lecture was about 550 words in length and the language (English) was kept as simple as possible while remaining informative about the praxis/theory relationship in the painting, and also to facilitate translation into Japanese. It should be said that the translation into Japanese by Tomoko san was well received and understood by all those who attended the lecture. The clarity of translating the painterly ideas from English to Japanese was delivered through pointing to particular paint traces within the image representing various times of light from morning, noon, afternoon and night whilst talking in English then stopping and letting Tomoko repeat the idea in Japanese. This was particularly useful in the sense that the Japanese audience could

clearly see the hue of the oil traces and understand that the idea equalled the paint traces on the image.

The expense of exhibiting at the Horikawa Gallery proved invaluable as an investment because of the curious nature of many of the responses leading to the question "*Why did you paint the Ikawa Valley?*" Winter in the Ikawa Valley can be seen in Plate 14.3.3.

Plate 14.3.1 *Ikawa valley in winter,* 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The response to this question was that it was Japan and there are many objects within that terrain that aroused interest; one does not need to climb mountains and seek traditionally aesthetic landscapes to create paintings. One could not be sure of the meaning behind every independent response. For instance; one Japanese gentleman said "*why don't you paint them bigger*" and then went down the stairs. Another

gentleman started to question me in broken Japanese - English about the green house effect. Generally, however, the exhibition was received with some curiosity in relation to the time-based theory in painting, for instance, the idea of time in painting being translated into oil traces and representing the differing lights of the seasons and hours of the day has not been executed in this way as far as I know. Therefore, like all things new, it takes some adjustment to the idea, The Japanese like interesting theories and they found the spectra of colours within the paintings (as exemplified in Plate 14.3.4) aesthetically pleasing, often remarking how beautiful the images were in the landscape and that they had not realised the range of colour which could be identified within the day or the seasons.

Plate 14.3.2 *Market garden* 2004, oil on board,
19 cm h x 44 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

A small Japanese-translated page from the catalogue (English) (See Appendix A.2) was placed on the wall next to a painting so that visitors who missed the lecture could understand the idea of the show with or without the translator present. This

small page of explanation was also well received and many of the visitors took extended time to read it and then slowly go round the exhibition. If the show was enormously costly, which it was given the many return trips taken in order to realise the theoretical light and seasons idea, it proved successful in terms of the response and, of the twenty works in the exhibition, five sold as gifts to people who were not known, so that was a great benefit!

Plates 14.3.3 and 14.3.4 show the exhibition as opened in the Horikawa Gallery.

Plate 14.3.3 Exhibition at the Horikawa Gallery, digital photograph by Peter Davidson

Plate 14.3.4 Exhibition at the Horikawa Gallery, digital photograph by Peter Davidson

Plates 14.3.5 to 14.3.20 present the artworks that were on show at the Horikawa Gallery

Plate 14.3.5 *Market garden* 2004, oil on board, 19 cm h x 44 cm w Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Plate 14.3.6 *Hillside Blossom* 2004, oil on board, 19 cm h x 44 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Plate 14.3.7 *Hillside Rice Paddies* 2004, oil on board, 34 cm h x 44 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Plate 14.3.8 *Ikawa Hillside 2004*, oil on board, 34 cm h x 44 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Plate 14.3.9 *Ikawa Hillside 2004*, oil on board, 44 cm h x 34 cm w, Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Plate 14.3.10 *Ikawa Bridge 2004*, oil on board 34 cm h x 43 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Plate 14.3.11 *Ikawa House 2004*, oil on board 44 cm h x 19 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Plate 14.3.12 *Ina Café Ikawa Valley 2004*, oil on board 44 cm h x 19 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Plate 14 3 13 *House Ikawa Valley*, oil on board 44 cm h x 19 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Plate 14.3 14 *Hillside Rice Paddies no 2*, oil on board, 44 cm h x 19 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Plate 14 3.15 *Ikawa Valley West,* oil on board, 19 cm h x 44 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Plate 14.3.16 *Hillside Rice Paddies no 3,* oil on board, 34 cm h x 43cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Plate 14.3.17 *North Side Ikawa Valley,* oil on board, 34 cm h x 43 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Plate 14.3.18 *Market Gardener's House 2004,* oil on board,
34 cm h x 43 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Plate 14.3.19 *Hillside Rice Paddies no2 2004,* oil on board
34 cm h x 43 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Plate 14.3.20 *Ikawa River no1 – 5,* 44 cm h x 19 cm w, oil on board by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

14.4 The Vincent Gallery, James Cook University

Exhibiting the praxis in the north of Queensland at James Cook University also contained challenges not only in terms of the location but in the curating of such a large body of artwork for one artist.

14.5 The Choice of the Vincent Gallery

The opportunity to exhibit the praxis at James Cook University, Vincent Campus over two weeks free of charge was a luxury for any artist. This venue was selected against other exhibition venues, for example, the Perc Tucker Gallery located in Townsville City centre. While this central gallery has the location to gain an audience, its spaces tend to be dislocated and militate against viewing the praxis in a cohesive space. The Vincent space, on the other hand, is one large space which proved beneficial given the large number of works to be exhibited plus the audience could stand back and view the works or examine them at leisure forensically; also there was a ready-made audience in the staff and students of the university. There was a bonus also in being resident on campus and close to the gallery which made opening times easier, and., in addition, I was available most of the time to talk with visitors as required.

14.6 The Exhibition at the Vincent Gallery

Once the gallery was chosen the challenge was to assemble and curate the works in that space. Unlike the Japan exhibition there were no immigration authorities with

whom to contend. While this was a plus, there were nevertheless logistical problems in sending such a large block of artwork across this large country. It was, moreover, the packing of the work that was the most difficult. To send paintings to Queensland from Western Australia and not expect some damage was hopeful but fortunately they did arrive safely.

14.6.1 Organisation of Exhibition at the Vincent Gallery

The Invitation and Catalogue were to be organised and finalized before the exhibition opened. The former was very basic in that it was a no frills black and white invitation that was easy to send electronically as well as by post and was designed to inform the potential audience of the opening times and dates (See Appendix B.1).

The Catalogue was developed with the intention that it would not only document the research but serve as an introduction to other professional possibilities in overseas institutions or galleries. The idea that the catalogue could potentially serve future uses came from visiting Japanese art galleries where almost every artist would normally spend $5000 - $10,000 on a promotional book which surveyed their artwork throughout their careers. The Catalogue for the Australian exhibition is included as Appendix B.2.

The artworks in this exhibition were brought together from a multiplicity of locations, mainly Perth and Japan, with various theoretical concerns such as the rendering of light on to the canvas from the public surfaces of motifs chosen through various

weathers, seasons and times of day/night. The other painting issue was the rendering of the motif in static conditions of weathers, seasons and lights as well as images rendered indoors; now these ideas in paint were to be hung cohesively in one exhibition space. In creating an exhibition of the praxis to theory from two vastly different locations in two contrasting parts in the world, the task was to present a coherent exhibition of the theory of the Calligraphic Vision in Painting.

14.6.2 The Curating of the Exhibition

Curating of an exhibition is one of the most crucial aspects of presentation of one's artworks and it is not something that receives significant attention in undergraduate art education where there is considerable emphasis on marketing and the challenge of how to present one's praxis to theory cohesively and succinctly for the audience to consume visually is often ignored.

It is thus important for artists to have some idea of how to hang an exhibition or at least to be able to access external help so that glaring errors such as clashes of paintings can be avoided. How curatorship reveals itself in the totality of one's work is a revelation for sometimes one or two paintings within an exhibition can detract from it and make it look average regardless of how good individual artworks are. Whatever one's aesthetic in hanging works may be, it is unlikely to be identical with that of others.

The hanging of paintings in the show became critical because there were some intense images (for example Plate 14.6.1, *Sekura Hana* (Cherry Blossom) with its

variety of intense blue hues ranging from deep prussian viridian blue, French ultra marine, light cobalt French ultramarine, purple cobalt blue to light cerulean blue).

Plate 14.6.1 *Cheery blossom on exhibit at the Vincent Gallery*, 2004, digital photograph by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Initially the image *Sekura Hana* was hung with other paintings but this did not work as the intensity of the image demanded its own space. With the help of Associate Professor Silver, the painting was relocated and given a small wall to itself, a solution which worked extremely well (see Gallery Layout Plate 14.6.2). When Professor Silver viewed the scope and nature of the drawing praxis, the decision was made that one wall should be used to create an installation from these works. Once installed, these drawings revealed tremendous insights into the development of the praxis from the research *Towards an Idiosyncratic Calligraphic Vision in Painting*. Indeed, as it eventuated, the drawing installation became one of the most scrutinised walls of the exhibition. Professor Silver's curatorship of the exhibition proved extremely helpful in achieving an overall cohesive aesthetic to the exhibition.

14.6.3 The Gallery Layout

Plate 14.6.2 shows the entry and layout of paintings at the Vincent Gallery while Plates 14.6.3 to 14.6.11 depict scenes from the opening night at the Vincent Gallery and specific views of the walls within the Gallery.

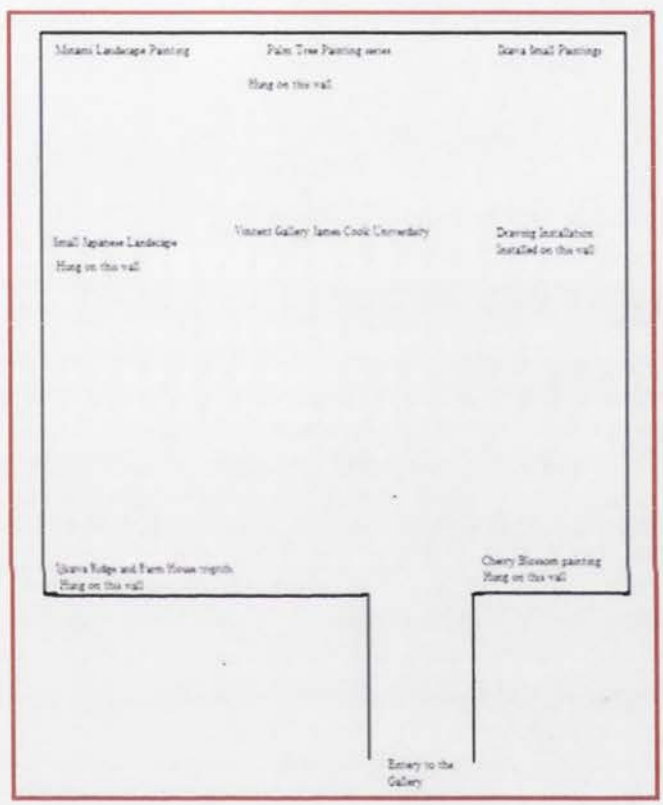

Plate 14.6.2 Vincent Gallery Layout

Plate 14.6.2 presents a corner view of the gallery on the opening night

Plate 14.6.3 *Opening of Vincent Gallery Exhibition*, digital photograph by Peter Davidson

Plate 14.6.4 *Part of Vincent Gallery Exhibition*, 2004, digital photograph,

The view of the exhibition space in Plate 14.6.4 is what the audience viewed upon walking into the Gallery. On the wall displaying the three Palm Tree paintings, to the left are six small paintings on paper in two groups for an interesting aesthetic

effect and also to make it easier for the viewer to move from painting to painting. On the other side of the Palm Tree paintings are the small time experiments from the Ikawa Valley.

Plate 14.6.5 *Part of Vincent Gallery Exhibition*, 2004, digital photograph, by Peter Davidson

Plates 14.6.5 and 14.6.6 containing the diptychs' were placed on the opposite wall to the entry both because they were larger than most of the other works on show and also because they fitted better there than on the wall divided by the entrance to the gallery

Plate 14.6.6 *Part of Vincent Gallery Exhibition*, 2004, digital photograph, by Peter Davidson

Plate 14.6.7 *Drawing installation*, Vincent Art Gallery, digital photograph by Peter Davidson

The drawing installation (Plates 14.6.7 to 14.6.9) had not initially been planned for inclusion in the exhibition but, following consultation with Professor Silver's curatorial advise it was exhibited in that format.

Plate 14.6.8 *Part of Drawing installation*, Vincent Art Gallery, digital photograph by Peter Davidson

Plate 14.6.9 *Focus on one artwork from the drawing installation*, digital photograph by Peter Davidson

Plates 14.6.10 and 14.6.11 present the early praxis of the research and lead the audience into the later more accomplished paintings.

14.6.10 *Exhibition Wall containing Japanese still life praxis*, digital photograph by Peter Davidson

14.6.11 *Part of the still life praxis on exhibition*, digital photograph, by Peter Davidson

14.7 Presentation of the works

Plates 14.7.1 to 14.7.16 present the research focus in painting as exhibited at the Vincent Gallery..

Plate 14.7.1 *The Yellow Teapot*, 2004, oil on canvas, 36 cm h x 40 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -) collection of the artist

Plate 14.7.2 *Teapot 1*, 2004, acrylic on canvas board, 38 cm h x 45.5 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -) collection of the artist

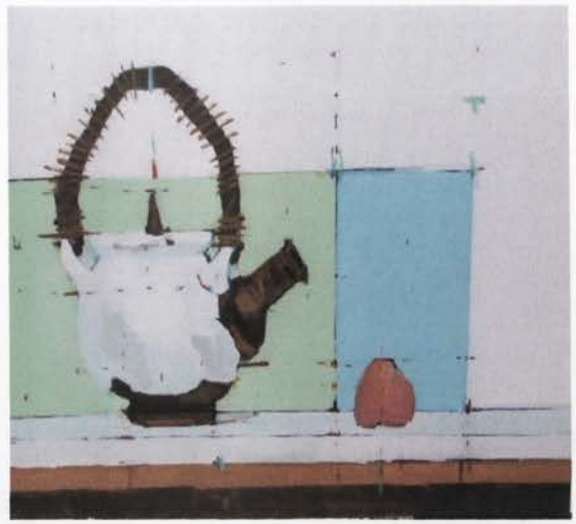

Plate 14.7.3 *Teapot 2*, 2004, acrylic on canvas board, 38 cm h x 45.5 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -) collection of the artist

Plate 14.7.4 *Palm Tree,* 2004, oil on canvas, 114 cm h x 65 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -) collection of the artist

Plate 14.7.5 *Bottle, Ball and Mirror*, 2004, oil on board, 40 cm x 30 cm by Peter Davidson (1958 -) collection of the artist

Plate 14.7.6 *Ikawa Valley Farm House*, 2004, oil on board left panel 120cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w, , by Peter Davidson (1958 -) collection of the artist

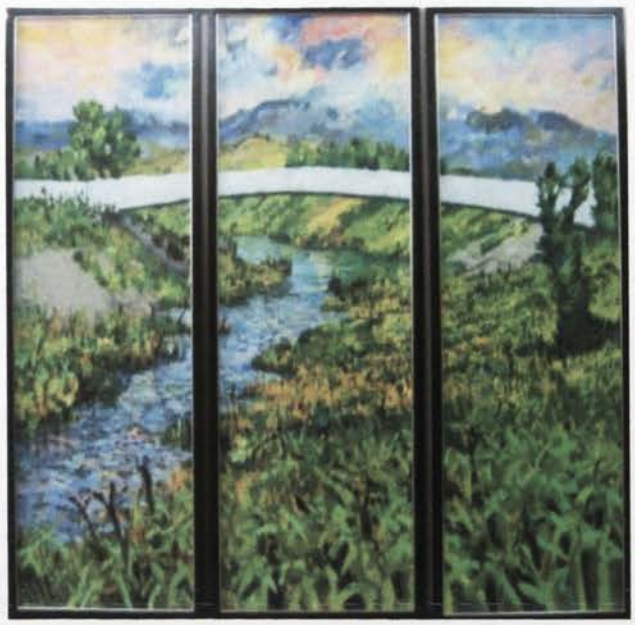

Plate 14.7.7 *Ikawa Bridge*, 2004, oil on board left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w, , by Peter Davidson (1958 -) collection of the artist

Plate 14.7.8 *Cherry Blossom Tree*, 2004, oil on board left panel 120 cm h x 40 cm w, middle panel 120 cm h x 42 cm w, 120 cm h x 40 cm w. by Peter Davidson (1958 -) collection of Mr & Mrs Stringer

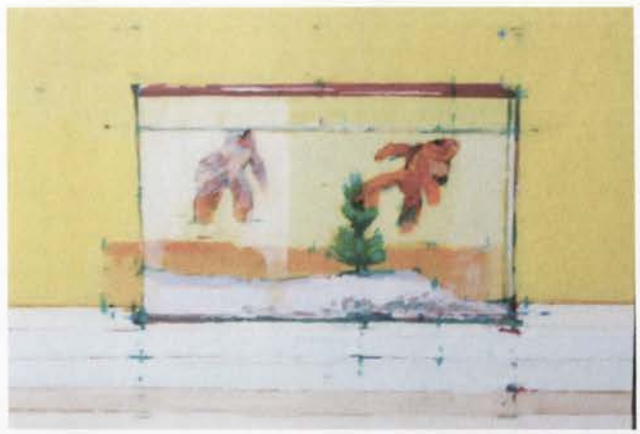

Plate 14.7.9 *Goldfish*, 2004, acrylic on board, 32 cm h x 41 cm w, by Peter Davidson (1958 -) private collection

Plate 14.7.10 *Red Pear*, 2004, acrylic on board, 32 cm h x 41 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -) private collection

Plate14.7.11 *Flower Painting,* 2004, acrylic on board, 32 cm h x 41 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -) private collection

Plate 14.7.12 *Minami Blue House,* 2004, acrylic on arches paper, 32 cm w x 41cm h by Peter Davidson. (1958 -) collection of the artist

Plate 14.7.13 *Seishin Minami Valley*, 2004, acrylic on arches paper 26 cm w x 24 cm h by Peter Davidson (1958 -) collection of the artist

Plate 14.7.14 *Minami House*, 2004, acrylic on arches paper, 26.5 cm h x 24 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -) collection of the artist

Plate 14.7.15 *Minami Rice Paddies,* acrylic on arches paper, 27 cm h x 24 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -) collection of the artist

Plate 14.7.16 *Minami Sienna House*, acrylic on arches paper, 27 cm h x 24 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

The organisation of the research praxis into exhibitions and the subsequent manning of the shows allowed considerable time for painterly realisations to be formed and these ideas (theories) opened the way for future painting paradigms to be developed.

Over the week in the gallery spent partially in examining the painted/drawn traces proved to be very beneficial in terms of what was gleaned from such observations. For example, the drawings, although constructed independently in front of the motif, then collectively presented as an installation, revealed times of light of differing landscapes. This drawing installation with its unity and diversity of ideas and marks is not is itself new a such artworks have a very old history as Andrew Graham-Dixon (2008) makes the point in his book Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel that

> Certain drawings for the Sistine Chapel suggest that he made use of the same skill in creating his paintings for the vault. He would produce numerous, apparently disjointed sketches and studies for a particular composition — an arm, a leg, a torso, modelled often from life in widely differing conditions of light and shade.(Graham -Dixon, 2008: 42)

But the drawings did exhibit a very different theory from that of Michelangelo in how the arbitrary nature of time's changing light, could be shown as a drawing installation.

As stated in 14.3, the Japanese people were at times perplexed as to why the Ikawa Valley was drawn/painted or the one hundred yen shop objects? This remains an interesting question and from sitting within these exhibitions some partial answers came to the fore through forensic analysis of some of the more passionately produced artworks exhibited, (against those laced with struggle as evidenced in the studio teapot in Plate 14.7.1). Examples of the former are the still lifes based on cheap plastic objects (Plate 14.7.11), the farm-house in the Ikawa Valley (Plate 14.7.6) the

cherry blossom tree on the side of the road, (Plate 14.7.8) on the way to the shops and why they inspired such passion in the traces.

These everyday plastic objects or seemingly mundane landscape motifs juxtaposed against the traditionally majestic painted landscape icons such as Mount Fuji, raised questions of desire and pictorial importance. Norman Bryson (2001), in his book Looking at the Overlooked, writes in relation to the choice of motifs thus:

> Perhaps one may draw on the distinction made by Charles Sterling between 'megalography' and 'rhopography'. Megalography is the depiction of things in the world which are great — the legends of the gods, the battles of heroes, the crises of history. Rhopography (from *rhopos,* trivial objects, small wares, trifles) is the depiction of those things which lack 'importance' constantly overlooks).(Bryson, 2001: 61)

The import of subject matter is different for everyone. To paint a cheap plastic apple is equally suitable as painting an expensive fresh mango for some, given that the properties of the light on the public surface of the fruit, operate in the same way upon both objects, therefore making both suitable as motifs. How motifs are chosen by the artist stems from idiosyncratic aesthetic desires and convenience in relation to painting them.

During the manning of the exhibitions and the resultant opportunity to actually analyse the paintings with greater objectivity, what emerged as important was the choice of motifs discussed in Chapter 7.4 because the motifs themselves had allowed

the praxis to theory to extend/enhance the theory of the calligraphic vision, opening up enhanced possibilities instead of closing off the painting idea into a finite theory. This was a pleasing outcome for the research and these future painting opportunities, along with the past praxis, are discussed in Chapter 15.

Chapter 15 Reflections, Review and Directions

15.1 The Exhibitions: Personal Reflections

The exhibition experience in Japan helped the painting praxis through the knowledge gleaned which was the calligraphic paint marks that came from remembrances of alien sensations and the shift in the system of painting, due to the shrinkage of the studio environment. Furthermore, the motivation of these discoveries from being placed into a completely different terrain and the understanding of new sensations being received through the landscape, weathers and people enhanced the success of the Vincent Gallery and subsequent exhibitions immensely.

One must acknowledge that some aspects of one's Australia art education in painting/drawing along with earlier pre-Vincent Gallery exhibitions was invaluable because it helped understand the sensation as experienced in Japan. For instance, the drawing of the Ikawa Valley was through analysis of time based recognition not only from the motif but one's personal memory of movement which entails understanding the constant shifting of vision within one's picture plane.

It was also interesting to see these independent drawn sensations collectively exhibited as an installation, because time and delay are about a diversity of moments and no matter what kind of controlled environment one is in, remembrances from other moments interject or fight for recognition and influence upon the *now* and, like this study, there is a unity but created from a diversity of memories from other times.

Therefore, when gazing at the drawing installation at the Vincent Gallery, it encapsulated the moments of first contact with Japan by allowing sensations to be realizations about alien colours, weathers and shifting lights more swiftly than painting may well have done. This was the most beneficial element of the drawing praxis.

15.2 The Exhibitions: Audience response

Visitors to the Vincent Gallery recorded their impressions in the Visitors' Book Provided. Comments have been classified according to their main focus as reflected in the subsections which follow.

15.2.1 Comments relating to the Exhibition *in toto*

How can you paint these that look so good from a distance? I think they are great

Fantastic effort, very inspiring, thank you for showing us.

Very nice work.

What can I say? Amazing work. Absolutely breathtaking.

If I had money I'll buy all.

Very interesting and worth while

15.2.2 Comments reflecting the painterly journey towards the Idiosyncratic Calligraphic Horizon

I have found it really impressive "thank you" for your tour, through your concepts and ideas.

Great journey, I feel I've travelled with you.

Brilliant, great journey

15.2.3 Comments reflecting on colour

I love the idea of colour studies very intriguing

I have never seen anything like it -flat - moving colour, layer on layer – it just works.

Great perception of shapes and colours

Wonderful use of colour and fabulous energy!

It's like the paintings were alive. Magnificent water, beautiful, gorgeous, colours. Are you God's brother!!

Wonderful use of colour, very beautiful.

Beautiful, Lovely composition in Sekura Hana, very aesthetically pleasing.

Love the colours! Love the oil paint! Set out well balanced,

Very colourful work Peter and very cheerful.

Great technique, lovely colours, very very good. Sekura Hana is magnificent.

Numbers 66 & 67 look like little red apples! It's been a pleasure to know you, Peter san.

The audience comments on colour provide insight into the researcher's encounters in Japan with master artworks and what is gleaned from such visual engagements, such as the dramatic shifts in systems of painting, along the same track outwards of the master painters with a somewhat of a different view rendered. It also reveals that audiences are not stupid as they understand and appreciate quality painting and the related efforts that go into making such images.

15.3 Reviewing the Aims of the Research

It is clear that the experience of Japan intertwined with the current successful history of the research to open more painterly and drawing investigations than would have been available had the study been located only in Australia. Hence it must be acknowledged that the aims of the research were significantly achieved as much through travelling and taking the research to another country - Japan - as through any preconceived determination.

Not only was the change of environment important for the research but there was also the amazing variety of constantly changing international exhibitions. What was able to be gleaned from studying master artworks was unparallel to anything that could be remotely experienced in Western Australia – and could not have been predicted at the commencement of the research. While only a relatively few exhibitions fed directly into the practice *per se* in terms of the examinable exhibitions, the result of being able to access major exhibitions on a regular basis has been to influence in significant ways the reflective processes in relation to the current research. The amount of information deriving from sighting master

drawings/paintings and retrieving this information into one's remembrances has served to create an even more sophisticated store house of memory which is in constant use in current praxis.

The praxis has not ceased and the success of the research is being realised in the *now*. The point reached has not been an end in itself but a door through which to move and discover many more nuances of light within one's remembrances of what has been experienced in the external world. While these have not always been understood at the point of physical experience, once realised in paint traces, further movement outwards towards the calligraphic horizon in painting has occurred.

For example, in Plate 15.3.1 there are the traces of recognised light in the *now* in how one's visual flux and other remembrances integrate within the image. This was difficult to resolve as a cohesive image.

Plate 15.3.1 *Untitled* 2009 22cm h x 27 cm w, acrylic on wooden board by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

In early January 2009 in seeing Homage to Cézanne, His Influence on the Development of Twentieth Century Painting at the Yokohama Museum of Art which seemed to be a kind of catalyst for this research, due to the influence of his painting

upon the research praxis and how his calligraphic paint traces provide a kind of bench-mark for what one can achieve.

Plate 15.3.1 exhibits a maturing surety of paint traces, compared with an early painting as seen in Plate 14.7.11 *Flower Painting,* 2004 and the confidence to take aesthetic risks in what to leave out and what to place within the picture plane. The integration with painted remembrance from other times and visual flux, creates what may be judged to be a somewhat unfinished quality, yet it is to the contrary as the painting is quite finished. This was a pleasing outcome of the research and it took a long time to achieve this kind of calligraphic vision in painting.

Moreover there is external verification of the ongoing trajectory of the research. After my 2005 exhibition at Perth Galleries, Subiaco, the art critic for The West Australian newspaper, in his weekly column commented that

> Davidson's paintings are austere, his compositions are sketched in and they already have the feel of faded memories. Small model birds attempt to pick overtly flat fluorescent fruit in settings that seem reminiscent of low – budget romance films.
>
> The more he takes out and the flatter he gets his paintings, the more successful they are to me. They don't take long to work out they are delightful to look at and his overuse of high tone pastel is beyond kitsch. The obvious historical references are to Bracques and Cézanne but Davidson also has an interesting flirtation with wood-block printing that

adds to the feel of these paintings being detached from time and place. (Spenser, 2005)

In relation to my 2008 exhibition at Perth Galleries North Fremantle premises, the same critic (Spencer, 2008) observed that

> Peter Davidson, whose experience of landscape is more mimetic, carves out his compositions as replicas based on remembered light, warmth and familiar ritual. I am only musing on this point because I saw Davidson's work coming down and Nicholas's going up during the week and it never ceases to amaze me how something so essential as responding to how we move through our surroundings could be represented in such a varied manner. While Davidson's work questions the act of painting as a cerebral exercise, Nicholas' fluid compositions in his White Cloud Story exhibition place the body in an atmospheric flow that stems from somewhere else. (Spenser, 2008)

It is pleasing that, on both occasions, his comments have gone to the heart of the research. However the recognition has the potential to be a double edged sword for therein lies the danger of contracting to the accomplishment of that calligraphic vision and turning it into a successful method of painting or technique for others to follow. My preference, however, is to move again towards uncharted horizons of calligraphic vision in painting recognizing that they do not come with any guarantee of achievement.

15.4 Scrutinizing the Calligraphic Vision in Action

The opportunity to visit the many international and local exhibitions available in Japan constitute a visual library for an artist on a scale unimagined in Australia for it allows the first hand evidence of the master artworks that travel frequently from Europe and America to be scrutinized forensically.

It was especially rewarding to be able to validate the current research into the calligraphic vision through viewing the *oeuvre* of each influential artist mentioned in Chapters three, four and five first hand. This was an unparalleled opportunity given that Western Australia does not attract major international touring artworks by artists Cézanne, Picasso, Rubens, and Rembrandt and the state's permanent collection do not hold significant quantities of their work. While a substitute, books do not compare with experiencing the paintings first hand as mostly they are lacking in the fundamentals a researcher needs in terms of the surface qualities. The opportunity of time a researcher needs to analyse the actual paint traces with their subsequent density, hue, tone at a forensic level, along with the progressive sophistication of applying oil marks throughout a painter's career trajectory, contributed to the research immeasurably.

Hence, the regular exhibitions visited in Japan yielded significant benefits, not only in terms of learning from the masters about painted surface qualities, which were mesmerising lessons for any artist, but also being challenged to understand how the paint marks equalled the intention of the artist's ideas.

For example; in *The Yellow Teapot* (Plate 14.7.11) which was rendered early in the study, the painting praxis had not yet been subjected to enough comparisons to master artworks later viewed as part of the study. On the other hand there was enough information from research into a more limited number of exhibitions to let one know that the painting so far had a long way to go. For instance, in Plate 14.7.11, the paint traces are dull and laboured; in retrospect it is awful image making.

Visiting many more international and local Japanese art exhibitions has been important in order to see as much good painting as possible and to scrutinize the paint traces forensically to see how they were applied towards realization of the idea behind the image.

The fruits of this forensic research into the paint traces of many exhibitions seen in Japan can be seen in this most recent painting in Plate 15.4.1.

Plate 15.4.1 *One Hundred Yen Still Life*, 2009, acrylic on board, 22 cm x 26 cm w by Peter Davidson (1958)

The paint traces in the above painting are placed with a surety which could not be achieved early in the research but, after constantly visiting to see master artworks, painting progression followed. For example, the back ground cobalt French ultramarine blues are brushed downwards with confidence. The upside down pear placed in a glass container is in a range of mid highlighted, light greenish yellows with some peach green yellowish tones placed slantwise under the curvature of the fruit. There are raw umber light pink sienna ochre traces where the pear has been bisected by the rays of the sun at the bottom but not the top of the fruit which have been painted from insight after viewing the praxis of the masters.

15.5 Implications for the Idiosyncratic Calligraphic Vision as Artistic Direction

The current research into the idiosyncratic calligraphic horizon model was never intended to be an end in itself. More to the point, it provided a concept and a challenge from which to launch one's praxis and investigate both contemporary and historical art practice. It is somehow associated with Heraclitean flux or, as I said as a little boy, "you are here and you are not here". Like mercury when dropped, the particles spread out; similarly the qualities of words never stay still as a fixed idea but only for the moment they are written on paper. Even though the words of this research are now set in concrete as written text as Bertrand Russell stated in his book titled The History of Western Philosophy (2005)

> What the above argument amounts to is that, whatever else may be in perpetual flux, the meanings of words must be fixed, at least for a time,

since otherwise no assertion is definite, and no assertion is true rather than false. There must be *something* more or less constant, if discourse and knowledge are to be possible, This, I think, should be admitted. But a great deal of flux is compatible with this admission. (Russell, 2005: 150)

Hence, as a place of continuous departure in painting, the concept of Idiosyncratic Calligraphic Vision in Painting yields a very helpful terrain within which to operate one's praxis.

15.6 Future Research and Praxis Directions

The interesting issue that has arisen from the praxis is how it has opened up further subject matter to be painted, initially through taking the study overseas into completely alien terrain which meant that it suddenly had to expand and build new systems because the comfort of what was known in painting suddenly was ruptured. Thus the idiosyncratic calligraphic horizon in painting, instead of becoming a deterministic and contractual point of no departure, has become a stimulus for new and fertile painting contacts.

Compared to white Australian visual culture Japan as has a long history of artists, who have blazed idiosyncratic calligraphic painting trails outwards in many different directions. Their artworks can be studied in the museums/art galleries. Hence one visually swathes through these artistic pleasures finding new subject matter. Although the problem of language and not being fluent in Japanese at times has been frustrating, and sometimes a barrier to the full understanding of the content of the

image being seen within the galleries, it did not stop the knowledge being assimilated to some degree, for brush-marks in any artist's *oeuvre* can be studied in pursuit of how the calligraphic vision developed through their painting career.

New visual sensations from fresh motifs do potentially create problems for the painter but systems of painting change through experimentation and, in doing so, enlarge the range and sophistication of the paint traces that, through constant praxis, become calligraphic and, hopefully, successful as an image. Currently, one motif being researched at the moment outside this study is the portrait painting of Japanese women, which comes from a long tradition dating back many centuries. This departure does not represent a rejection of past painterly motifs such as still life and landscape but rather the additions of new ones that have not been seriously researched, namely subject matter such as human anatomy in painting. One example of Japanese influence upon ones new direction in painting can be seen in Plate 15.6.1.

Plate 15.6.1 *Title unknown*, 1823 – 80, 35 cm h x 23 cm w wood - block print by Kunisada II, collection of Peter Davidson

The portraiture praxis so far has encompassed six Japanese women. This will no doubt extend to about twenty and the current underlying concept is Manichi Bijin which, translated into English, means *everyday beauty*. This seemed appropriate to the nature of the contemporary lifestyle these women now have, which is one of constant work and, with that, they are somehow trying to achieve a kind of personal ideal attractiveness in what seems to be the most chaotic industrialised place in the world. It is essentially very hard to describe the conditions of these women to an Australian as there is simply nothing that could compare. Nevertheless, through all this, the historical grooming that has come down through the Japanese Kimono culture seems still to have its place even if somewhat radically altered. In discovering this attitude in Japan and not making a judgment on it in painting, it appeared to be an ideal motif for the extension of the idiosyncratic calligraphic vision.

The portrait series in Plates 15.6.2 and 15.6.3 has attained a certain surety in painting from the amount of praxis that has been invested in this research. There does not seem to be the arduous task of reinventing the system in order to gain a competent calligraphic vision. Therefore, when painting the portraits with the *aide memoire* of a photograph, significant concentration can be given to attaining the right hue as remembered from the time and photograph. The memory that is being painted will attain an image consistent with the remembrances that took place through time and space and rendered in the *now*.

Plate15.6.2 *Lilly of the Valley*, 2006, 33 cm h x 24 cm w, acrylic on wooden board by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

Plate 15.6.3 *Yorkachan,* 2006, 33 cm h x 24 cm w, acrylic on wooden board by Peter Davidson (1958 -)

As the current portrait and figurative ventures in painting stem directly from the research, the paint traces are tentative but will progress as knowledge is gleaned in the praxis.

Nevertheless such evolutions in painting appear to require resolution over time within one's praxis to theory as evidenced in the chapters discussing the masters studied within this research and as explained here by Picasso:

> I also often hear the word evolution. Repeatedly I am asked to explain how my painting evolved. To me there is no past or future in art. If a work cannot live always in the present it must not be considered at all ... When I hear people speak of the evolution of an artist, it seems to me that they are considering him standing between to mirrors that face each other and reproduce his image an infinite number of times, and that they contemplate the successive images of one mirror as his past, and the images of the other mirror as his future, while his real image is taken in the present. They do not consider that they are all the same images in different planes. Variation does not mean evolution. If an artist varies his mode of expression this only means that he has changed his manner of thinking and in changing, it might be for the better or it might be for the worse. (Cowling, 2002: 22)

Picasso sheds some light on the journey of calligraphic vision outwards here in the sense that jumping from one idea to another may not make the artist better and there is no guaranteed way of getting to a high level painting. However it but does seem that to be passionate in your desire to learn from praxis in order to attain an original theory may eventually render some results that are pleasing.

More importantly, in recently seeing the Cézanne (2008 - 09) exhibition at the Yokohama Museum of Art, one can learn from the way Cézanne focused on an idea

and constantly added to it throughout his life-long praxis thus building it into something extraordinary as witnessed in the exhibits on show and, at least to an extent in some ways, the last six years of this research have yielded an original idea in painting towards a far more sophisticated horizon in painting.

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Bridgestone Museum of Art -Tokyo 2003/04/05

Collection of Great Pieces from the Master Artists,- Masterpieces from the Kawamura Memorial Museum of Art, Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art, Kobe, July 28th – October 8th 2007

Dream Collections, The Osaka Collections, National Museum of Art, Osaka, January 16th – March 25th 2007

Dresden, Spiegel der Welt. Die Staatlichen Kunstammlungen Dresden in Japan, Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art, 8th March – 22nd May 2005

Essential Painting, The National Museum of Art, Osaka, October 6th - December 24th 2006

Gustav Klimt und das Frauenbild in Wien um 1900, Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art, 28 June 21 September 2003

Gustave Moreau -Hyogo Prefecture Museum of Art, Kobe, 7th. June 2005 – 31st . July 2005.

Hiroshima Museum of Art Collection, Hiroshima Museum of Art January 2006

Homage to Cezanne, His Influence on the Development of Twentieth Century Painting Yokohama Museum of Art,15th November 2008 – 25th January 2009

L'Ecole DeParis – Entre Primitivismes et Nostalgie, Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art 18th October – 17th December 2006

Louvre, Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art, 30th July – 18th October 2005

Marc Chagall - In Praise of Love and Nature - Nara Prefectural Museum of Art Oct 6-Sun. Dec 16, 2007

Masterpieces of the Museum Island, Berlin - Visions of the Devine in the Sanctuary of Art, Kobe City Museum, August 2005

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Milano (Cultera Musei e Mostre), Osaka Municipal Museum of Art, Osaka September 6th – October 16th 2005

Mirrorical Returns, Marcel Duchamp and Twenty Century Art, The National Museum of Art, Osaka, December 2004

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Picturing America: Selections from the Whitney Museum of American Art (Whitney on tour) Hyogo Prefecture Museum of Art, April 4th – May 14th 2006

Prado "From Titian to Goya. Masterpieces of the Museo Del Prado" Institutional Lineup, Osaka Municipal Museum of Art, July 15th – October 15th 2006

Rembrandt's Etchings The Embrace of Darkness and Light, Nagoya Boston Musuem – Nagoya, September 8th – December 9th 2007

The Allure of Edo Ukiyo-e Painting from the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Kobe City Museum, April 15th – May 28th 2006

The Australian National Gallery, The Australian Section, June 2007

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The Kyoto National Museum Special Exhibition, Sliding Door Panels of the Kyoto Imperial Palace, Kyoto National Museum, January, 6th – February 18th 2007

The Mind of Leonardo, The Universal Genius At Work, Tokyo National Museum March 20th – June 17th 2007

The Nakamura Collection, Pleiades Barbizon School, Kobe, Diamaru, 2003

The National Portrait Gallery of Australia, Old Federal Parliament House ACT, Australia June 2007

The Three Great Civilizations of the Mesoamerica & the Central Andes, The World of Maya, Aztec and Inca, Kobe City Museum, October 3rd – December 24th 2007

The Victorian Nude: Morality and Art in 19th Century Britain, Tate Gallery Travelling Exhibition, *Kobe City Museum May 2003*

The World of Claude Monet - Nagoya Boston Museum of Fine Arts - Nagoya - Japan April 26th – September 28th 2008

Traces Body and Idea Contemporary Art, The National Museum of Art Kyoto, November 9th - 19th December 2004

Treasures from the World's Cultures: The British Museum after 250 Years, Kobe City Museum January 17th – 28th March 2004

Turner to Monet, The Triumph of Landscape, Australian National Gallery, 14 March – 9 June 2008

Two by Two, Pairs, Couples and Lovers in Art, Bridgestone Museum, Tokyo August 24th – September 11th 2005

Western Blue - A Tour of Prussian Blue, - Kobe City Museum July 2007

155 Works from the Ohara Museum of Art, January 2006

Appendix A: Japan

A.1 Inivitation

Light of the Ikawa Valley
Painted through Time

時間とともに描かれた伊川谷の光

by

Peter Davidson

2004/4/8 (木) ～4/13(火)

作品についての講演

20040410（土）16:00PM～

20040411（日）14:00PM～ (約30分)

Horikawa Gallery
Kobe·Japan

A2: Exhibition catalogue and list of artworks

Light of the Ikawa Valley

Painted through Time

by

Peter Davidson

Horikawa Gallery

Kobe-Japan

These objective paintings exhibit illuminated objects from differing times of light, weather and seasons in the Ikawa Valley landscape. The phenomena of light that reveals itself upon the objects are then collapsed onto a single canvas. That means these painted oil traces acknowledging the early morning, evening, midday and late afternoon lights are then randomly placed next to each other over the canvas, using the influence of delay through a system of painting. For instance, the memory (vision) seen in Japan is then painted in the studio in Australia this is delay.

Essentially delay is a Japanese invention that can be seen in the artworks of the Ukiyoe Print master Hokusai, as evidenced in his famous 100 Views of Edo. Hokusai. These visions (memories) of Hokusai were not subjective but very much objective memories (visions) drawn with immediate vision directly from nature (memory) and finished with delayed memory (vision) in his room in Edo.

Originally it was the thought the French Impressionists were the first to use delay's influence in art but it must be recognised that the objective vision using delay is a Japanese innovation.

This exhibition is taking that idea of delay a little further by using the system of art invented by Hokusai, reinvented by Claude Monet the French Impressionist as a singular moment of vision (memory), painted on site through a series of lined up canvasses and then painted in the

studio, as evidenced in the Haystack series. More importantly Monet made the statement in a letter to his wife Alice, whilst painting the Rouen Cathedrals. *that the light was always breaking away,* so it was frustrating him painting that singular moment of light..

These artworks through using a system of painting through time has partially solved that problem of light and weathers breaking away all the time by collapsing them into a painted singular synthesis. This system of painting was first called Object Painting invented by myself in 1996. Since then the need to push Object Painting to its extreme lead me to Japan. This was necessary because it challenged everything I knew as a painter in Australia and having had no knowledge of the culture or the landscape that was being seen, it made the imagery of the Ikawa Valley as objective as it possibly could be, which was ideal and these images are the result

I would like to thank Tomoko, the people of the Ikawa Valley, I-na café, Professors Davis and Silver from James Cook Universities Visual Art Department Queensland, Australia and my family for their generous support for this exhibition.

1. Ikawa Valley (west)
2. Hillside Blossom
3. Market Gardeners House
4. North Side Ikawa Valley
5. Ikawa Bridge
6. Ikawa Hillside

7. Hillside Rice Paddies
8. I-na Café Ikawa Valley
9. House Ikawa Valley
10. Market Garden
11. Ikawa River no1
12. Ikawa River no2
13. Ikawa River no3
14. Ikawa River no4
15. Ikawa River no5
16. Hillside Rice Paddies no1
17. Hillside Rice Paddies no2
18. Hillside Rice Paddies no3
19. Ikawa House
20. All Weather Bridge

Appendix B: Exhibition Australia

B. 1 Invitation

Invitation for the Vincent Gallery at James Cook University

B. 2 List of exhibition works

Catalogue of works for exhibition at the Vincent Gallery at James Cook University

Drawings

Ikawa Valley

1. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
2. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
3. Untitled	pen/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
4. Untitled	pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
5. Untitled	pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
6. Untitled	fountain pen wash on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
7. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
8. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
9. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
10. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
11. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
12. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
13. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
14. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
15. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
16. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w

17. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
18. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
19. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
20. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
21. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
22. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
23. Untitled	pencil on arches paper	32 cm h x 41 cm w
24. Untitled	pencil on arches paper	32 cm h x 41 cm w
25. Untitled	pencil on arches paper	32 cm h x 41 cm w
26. Untitled	pencil on arches paper	32 cm h x 41 cm w
27. Untitled	w/colour/ black pen/pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
28. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
29. Untitled	pencil on arches paper	32 cm h x 41 cm w
30. Untitled	pencil on arches paper	32 cm h x 41 cm w
31. Untitled	pencil on arches paper	32 cm h x 41 cm w
32. Untitled	pencil on arches paper	32 cm h x 41 cm w
33. Untitled	watercolour/ pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w

Onsite Paintings Studies Ikawa Valley

34.1	Traditional	study	acrylic on board	12.5 cm h x 23 cm w
34.1a	Through time	study	acrylic on board	12.5 cm h x 23 cm w
34.2	Traditional	study	acrylic on board	12.5 cm h x 23 cm w
34.2a	Through time	study	acrylic on board	12.5 cm h x 23 cm w
34.3	Traditional	study	acrylic on board	12.5 cm h x 23 cm w

34.3a	Through time	study	acrylic on board	12.5 cm h x 23 cm w
34.4	Traditional	study	acrylic on board	12.5 cm h x 23 cm w
34.4a	Through time	study	acrylic on board	12.5 cm h x 23 cm w
34.5	Traditional	study	acrylic on board	12.5 cm h x 23 cm w
34.5a	Through time	study	acrylic on board	12.5 cm h x 23 cm w
34.6	Traditional	study	acrylic on board	12.5 cm h x 23 cm w
34.6a	Through time	study	acrylic on board	12.5 cm h x 23 cm w

Still Life Paintings

35.1	Bottle and Ball with Mirror	acrylic on board	38 cm h x 45 cm w
35.1a	Bottle and Ball with Mirror	acrylic on board	38 cm h x 45 cm w
35.2	Teapot	acrylic on board	38 cm h x 45 cm w
35.2a	Teapot	acrylic on board	38 cm h x 45 cm w

Paintings from the Ikawa Valley

36.1	All weather Bridge	oil on board	30 cm h x 40 cm w
36.2	Hillside Rice Paddies no 3	oil on board	30 cm h x 40 cm w
36.3	Hillside Rice Paddies no 1	oil on board	30 cm h x 40 cm w
36.4	Ikawa River no 2	oil on board	40cm h x 15 cm w
36.5	Ikawa River no 3	oil on board	40cm h x 15 cm w
36.6	Ikawa House	oil on board	40cm h x 15 cm w
36.7	House Ikawa Bridge	oil on Board	40cm h x 15 cm w

Paintings from Ikawa Valley – Seishen Minami

38.	Minami Blue House	acrylic on arches paper	26.5 cm h x 24 cm w
39.	Minami Sienna	acrylic on arches paper	26.5 cm h x 24 cm w
40.	Ikawa River	acrylic on arches paper	26.5 cm h x 24 cm w
41.	Minami	acrylic on arches paper	26.5 cm h x 24 cm w
42.	Minami Rice Paddies	acrylic on arches paper	24 cm h x 26.5 cm w
43.	Minami House	acrylic on arches paper	26.5 cm h x 24 cm w
44.	Goldfish	acrylic on board	32 cm h x 41 cm w
45.	Red Pear	acrylic on board	32 cm h x 41 cm w
46.	Hana	acrylic on board	32 cm h x 41 cm w
47.	Untitled	pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
48.	Untitled	pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
49.	Untitled	pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
50.	Untitled	pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
51.	Untitled	pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
52.	Untitled	pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
53	Untitled	pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
54.	Untitled	pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w
55.	Untitled	pencil on arches paper	28.5 cm h x 38 cm w

Drawings from August

56	Untitled	coloured pencil on paper	24 cm h x 33 cm w
57	Untitled	coloured pencil on paper	24 cm h x 33 cm w

58	Untitled	coloured pencil on paper	24 cm h x 33 cm w
59	Untitled	coloured pencil on paper	24 cm h x 33 cm w
60	Untitled	coloured pencil on paper	24 cm h x 33 cm w
61	Untitled	coloured pencil on paper	24 cm h x 33 cm w
62	Untitled	coloured pencil on paper	24 cm h x 33 cm w
63	Untitled	coloured pencil on paper	24 cm h x 33 cm w

B.3 Catalogue

The Role of Time in Creating the Intersection between the Objective and the Calligraphic Vision

Peter Davidson

Sekura Hana

at the
James Cook University
Vincent Gallery, Townsville
12 – 26 November 2004

An exhibition of work as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at the

College of Music, Visual Arts and Theatre, James Cook University

Research Praxis

I am working like a madman, alas, whatever you may say, I am finished and no longer good for anything. Everything is breaking away at the same time: the weather is not stable: yesterday there was a bright sun, this morning it was foggy, this afternoon the sun disappeared just when I needed it: tomorrow it will be dark-grey or it might rain. [1]

The French painter Claude Monet wrote this in an account of his progress to his wife Alice on Thursday evening on March 9th, 1893. His concern were with how the public surfaces of weather and light (those surfaces only the eye can see) behaved through time across his chosen motif, that being the Rouen Cathedral in France: While Monet is referring to obvious problems of flux and vision through time in painting from the public surfaces of nature, this has ever been a universal difficulty in painting.

In 1996, whilst painting with William Coldstream's dogmatic creed of measured exactitude, essentially related to getting things in their right place according to the traditions of objective painting, a significant problem emerged. This involved the realisation that the light shifted across the motif. Hence the shadows grew longer and the hue and tones darker with the setting of the sun, thus casting doubt on the theory. I was decided to test objectivity by deliberately painting across time by chasing the light, weathers and seasons as they occurred from memory (vision). For instance, one trace of oil paint could exhibit morning, another midday or evening to capture the traces of time ob the canvas

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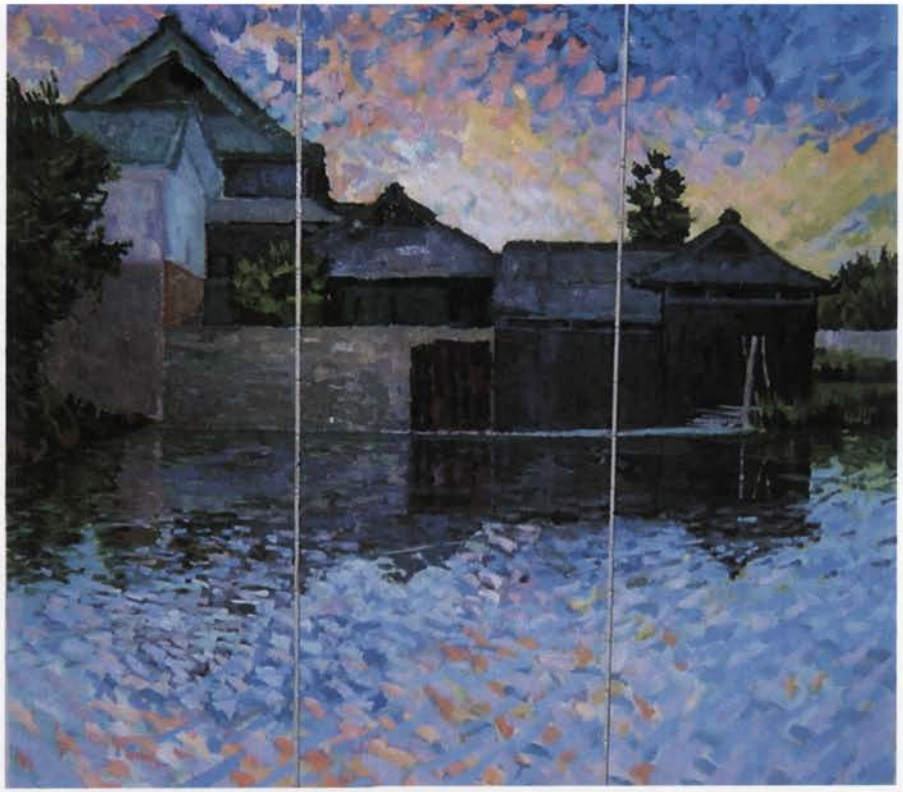
[1] Op site; Guillard, M. J. E., Claude Monet, At the time of Giverney, Guillard Edition, Paris, 15 rue des beaux – Arts, Paris, 75006

This research is now creating ongoing and developing systems in painting that articulate sense – data towards the calligraphic horizon using delay in objective painting. The images in this exhibition document that journey to date. The journey is continuing.

Peter Davidson



Ikawa Valley Farm House

Killing Time/Painting Time, the work of Peter Davidson.

I could never be a painter because, when I try to paint, it feels like painting things out.

Mike Parr in conversation.

Stop him, he's killing time!

The White Rabbit

War leader and distinguished amateur painter Winston Churchill first drew my attention to the unavoidable presence of memory in every painting 'from the life'. His point was that, in order to make a mark of any kind, the artist must necessarily shift his attention from the view or object that he is presenting, to the support, canvas, panel or paper on which he is constructing its image. Consequently all paintings are memories, reconstructions. Whatever the image, whatever the style, the painter always paints memory.

This has profound practical consequences. Every representational painting, good or bad, is a temporal fugue, the history of the artist's looking and seeing, and the history of his marks made on the canvas, are inscribed into the time–scape of its painted surface. The finer the artist the finer the fugue, the more this time–scape resonates with the viewer. The less cliché, manner or idiom intrude into one's relation
with the painting, the more it can refresh one's spirit.

A critic with the most thorough acquaintance with memory, Proust, understood Vermeer in terms of remembrance, phenomena not photography. In his description of the death of a writer he balances the moment of death, a moment within a painting, against a life time.

—a critic having written that in Vermeer's View of Delft (lent by the museum at The Hague for an exhibition of Dutch painting), a painting he adored and thought he knew perfectly, a little patch of yellow wall (which he could not remember) was so well painted that it was, if one looked at it in isolation, like a precious work of Chinese art of an entirely self-sufficient beauty.

—Finally he stood in front of the Vermeer, which he remembered as having been more brilliant, more different from everything else he knew, but in which, thanks to the critic's article, he now, noticed for the first time little figures in blue, the pinkness of the sand, and finally the precious substance of the tiny area of wall. His head spun faster; he fixed his gaze, as a child does on a yellow butterfly he wants to catch, on the precious little patch of wall. 'That is how I should have written, he said to himself.

My last books are too dry, I should have applied several layers of colour, made my sentences precious in themselves, like that little patch of yellow wall.' He knew how serious his dizziness was. In a heavenly scales, he could see, weighing down one of the pans, his own life, while the other contained the little patch of wall so beautifully painted in yellow.

Proust notes that there is nothing in a lifetime of experience to compel Vermeer's extraordinary integrity—to make the unbelieving artist feel compelled to paint a single, passage twenty times over, when the admiration it will excite will be of little importance to his body, when it is eaten by the worms, like the little piece, of yellow wall painted with such knowledge and such refinement by the never-to-be-known artist whom we have barely identified by the name of Vermeer.

Marcel Proust, In Search of Lost Time Book 3 The Prisoner

Immortality it seems can only be reached in and through the moment

Only through his awareness and acceptance of this dynamics of attention to discrete moments as they pass, to an accumulation of phenomena inscribed on the painted surface, can the painter succeed. This inscription of memory alone has saved painting from absolute bankruptcy. Without memory, painting becomes less than a souvenir, no more than a brand new, very expensive, coloured postcard uninscribed, unaddressed.

Of course there has always been an audience for coloured postcards and there are always artists willing, for a suitable fee of course, to attempt to eliminate every last trace of time from their work. There is more, much more, to be said about the continuous uninflected surfaces of the nineteenth century salon and of much recent painting, whose aim seems to be to rival, or surpass, the inert photo–death of the cibachrome print, also much in vogue. Their aim is to kill time, to stop time dead. Such images invite or invoke an addiction that lies at the centre of our current dilemma, the irresistible urge towards frozen rapture, a glacial, pornographic gaze, the end game of an irreconcilable narcissistic desire. They offer no epiphany. It was not for nothing that Cocteau believed death entered the world through mirrors.Mike Parr intuitively recognised this addiction when he remarked that he could never be a painter because, for him, painting felt more like painting the world out than revealing new aspects of experience.

This note, however, is a brief defence of the unique necessities of painting and of the work of Peter Davidson in particular. Peter has had the courage to kick the habit, to abandon frozen rapture in favour of an open engagement with experience through painting. Simply put, there is no other medium through which this engagement can take place.

Peter began his career as a painter with a critical encounter with one of the most notorious twentieth century attempts to kill time, the procedures advocated by William Coldstream under the term 'measured exactitude'. Coldstream reworked the strategies of Cezanne as a discipline. He eliminated every last trace of Cézanne's guiding intuition, his 'little sensation'. Instead, Coldstream proposed measurement taken to its extreme, as a means to access a pure phenomenon of vision. Without Cézanne's human 'sensation before the world', memory and time evaporated as the work was made. Coldstream's paintings were superbly crafted failures.

Nonetheless Coldstream's method raised a number of cogent difficulties for the possibility of painting. Two in particular affected Peter's work, the question of what painting can be, what it can represent and the problem of the brush mark. It became clear that painting 'from the life' could only present the external surfaces of the world. These, however, were subject to continual change through time. The issue of the brushmark was far more challenging. From Seurat's scintillations to Coldstream's gentlemanly delicatesse all attempts to standardise the brushstroke in order to make painting transparent to the world, that is to phenomena 'in themselves', have failed. This is because painting is always more than, must always exceed, any arbitrary technique of observation.

For painting 'from the life' at least, all phenomena of vision must contain the artist. The brushmark is or should be far more than the equivalent of a pixel or some arbitrary, quirky expression of the artist's always less than unique personality. The brushmark is shaped by the limits of the artist's vision as it impacts the resistance of the phenomena around him—the external surface of things. These literally shape the mark, they determine its length, density and the time taken to make it. The brushmark exists at the boundary between world and artist; it ties the painting to time and space. This occurs because the brushmark is always made 'from memory', it inscribes memory within the painting.

These issues have preoccupied Peter for some years. He initially returned to the point at which they first emerged as the central problem for painting — the work of Cezanne and Monet. Later he reviewed the understanding of mark making in Japanese painting, in which the mark itself is recognised as one of the phenomena of the

natural world and skill is understood as a profound submission to nature. From this research he has developed a unique and risky approach to painting, in particular to 'plein air' landscape and still life.

He believes that it is possible to produce a single integrated image of a scene or place, as it is experienced through time. In doing so, he combines Monet's interest in the passing moment with Cezanne's obsession with the enduring substance of things. Each artist chose one half of the phenomenon, the experience of time and memory; Cezanne attempted to reach the underlying structure of a particular experience by ignoring the moment, Monet sought his sense of being in the moment alone.

Peter has chosen to work with both strategies in a single canvas. He attempts a structure built from moments observed through time. This is a very difficult task. No other painter has attempted it. At times, I have doubted whether it is possible to produce a unified composition in this way. There is the question of shifting tonalities, of colour harmony and of the integrity of the surface of the painting. Greenberg identified this as the necessity of flatness — a weaving of brushmarks into a seamless structure, plastic and temporal, that is experienced as a single flat surface.

Peter, however, is a dedicated and impressively consistent artist He is very familiar with his sources and with the issues raised by his painting. In the last two years he has succeeded in producing some remarkably vibrant work through in light and time pass like the days of our lives.

Peter lives opposite the beach at Trigg. There is a tall palm tree in his backyard. It provided the perfect motif for his early experiments. Light from the sea, invisible beyond the weatherboard house constantly shifts and shapes the tree against the sky, which is itself a kaleidoscope of clouds set in a screen woven from a miriad of shimmering blues.

In his first painting session, which happened to be late afternoon—evening, Peter anchored his painting to the form of the tree, a dark shape surmounted by few green lines, silhouetted in a patchwork quilt of blues. Each area of painting is allowed its own characteristic brushwork a confrontation of time and chaos

The second session expanded the paint area outwards across the canvas. Soon memory appeared in the spaces between time, in the gaps between the areas of canvas devoted to different moments, as Peter observed

—even when painting in front of the motif the remembrances of other times influence the painting. For instance, there is a few small calligraphic strokes of light morning dew on the long grass at the bass of palm tree in the painting. These few marks of dew on the grass represent a far more succinct delivery of vision through the mechanics of painting, they are not forced but eventuate at the intercession without a conscious forced effort it was simply a response to nature from vision.

The painting that eventually emerged through these experiments has an extraordinary presence. Like Vermeer's patch of wall, it is rigorously repainted, overworked in a passionate attempt to bring memory and the moment into a perfect congruence. Midnight dark, blue shadow, bright morning, and all hues in between are woven through the image.

It is reminiscent of Monet's series Poplars but this is one image, a fulfillment, perhaps of the philosopher Bergson's notion of duration, in which the true shapes, the presence of things can only be grasped through time.

Japanese painting traditions, indeed Japanese culture as a whole has always taken for granted that the purpose of painting is to see eternity in the moment, the movement of a fish as its swims, the perfect form of one moment in the life of flower. Japanese artists cultivated a vision in which it is these things that are seen, not volume and shadow, not painfully accurate measurement à la Coldstream.

As can be seen in this exhibition Peter's experiments are taking his work ever closer to a unique western counterpart to this attitude Indeed he has drawn from the example of Japanese art, though not Japanese style, in developing solutions to his painterly problems. He has become a regular visitor to Japan and has begun to paint in the landscape round Kobe, not the clichéd tourist landscape, but the mundane everyday vistas of life and work as transformed through 'moment-to-moment' memory.This is most notable in the small pieces that he showed in Kobe last year.

For some time he worked in the Ikawa valley. He selected specific motifs, a bridge, a house, buildings by water. He chose a concrete bridge because of its affinity with the bridge motif in Japanese woodblock prints. The bridge however, is also an important motif in Cezanne's work, where it serves as an anchor for the spatial flux of the landscape across the canvas.

Peter uses the Ikawa valley bridge as an anchor for his image through time. One lunch time study uses techniques similar to Cezanne's except that Peter's initial outlines, his 'shadow paths' are in bright carmine, not blue or brown as in Cezanne. Later pieces incorporate changes to the view as mist from a typhoon and smoke from burning paddy fields changed colours and shifted distance between hills and horizon. The broken red outlines, taut, shifting or slack, function as signs for shifts in time for moving zones of intimacy and presence its surface.

Back at Trigg Peter produced a large triptych of a bridge crossing a river, which he accumulated the lessons learned from the Ikawa valley. The greater scale, and the necessary challenge of working away from the object, placed the emphasis in the work of painting on the quality of brush strokes, as variegated ribbons of time. His aim was to balance the surface of the painting equitonally, so to speak so that the bridge would hang free, in space and time, an infinite object of contemplation.

To the right over the hills, for instance, is an intensely spillage of blues, grays, ochres and pinks produced as the time seeps from sky to land. The greens in the foreground foliage are orchestrated as tightly in size and rhythm as anything in Monet. As we know, the master of Giverny also worked in his studio. The Poplars were all restructured there, far from the river, over a considerable period of time. This is the only way to open a painting to memory, to let time flow through it like ribbons of honey, viscous, sticky, the substance of our being. It bears repeating that painting cannot be made transparent to some supposedly pure phenomena of being. Peter's marks all have a unique, flowing, elemental quality as if they would break their bounds, cling to the earth or water beneath them, soak into the bones of the landscape.

As complement to these, Peter also works on still lives, using set–ups in a small back room of his house. Still life does not move like landscape. Yet it still exists through time and memory so that the act of painting still life emphasises existential qualities of presence much closer to inertia and endurance. Still life tends to be composed of human artifacts. It prompts the painter to ask how life much can be carried through a single moment and to paint that moment. A still life with a bamboo handled teapot and green a white ball went through along period of linear analysis, an almost monumental structuration as the clues to its presence in memory were slowly unfolded from the image.

Ultimately though the density of each mandated surface swamps this chart like guide to a presence through the quality of its paint

It is clear that Peter is on the edge of some major achievements in his art. Remarkably, the more elegant his painting becomes the more it touches on issues that are central to recent art of all kinds, such as identity, memory and the narratives of place and presence which we all share. Painting that acknowledges its existence in memory can continue forever.

David Bromfield

Ikawa River

I would like to thank all those people who have supported me in one way or another over the many years in Australian and Japan for without there help this exhibition would not have been possible.

Biographical Details

Education

Current – Doctor of Philosophy (Visual Art) James Cook University, part-time – Completed, 1998 Master of Fine Art (Research) University of Western Australia 1993 B.A Honours Class 2a – Visual Art-Edith Cowan University, School of Visual Art – 1989 – 86 B.A. Visual Art- Major in Painting- Edith Cowan University, 1984 – 82 Diploma in Fine Art – Major in Painting, Claremont School of Art

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2004 *The Light of the Ikawa Valley painted through time*, Gallery Horikowa, Kobe – Japan

1998 Gulag Gallery, Perth Western Australia

1996 *Object Painting*, New Collectables Gallery, Fremantle, Western Australia

1994 Private Gallery, Perth, Western Australia

1992 Kalgoorlie Galleries, Kalgoorlie, Western Australia

Selected Group Exhibitions

2002 *Recent Works*, Perth Galleries, Western Australia

2000 *The Strangeness of Natural Vision, 36 Views of the Mandurah Estuary*, & Recent Paintings, Jonathon Snowball Perth Galleries, Western Australia

1999 City of Joondalup Art Prize, Joondalup, Western Australia

1997 Chosen for the *Fresh 97* Exhibition, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Perth, Western Australia

1996 *The Underfeeted*, Cullity Gallery, University of Western Australia.

1994 Peter Davidson & Gareth Morse, Goldfields Art Gallery, Kalgoorlie, Western Australia

1993 Portfolio, Parliament House, Western Australia

1991 Peter Davidson, Brian Mckay & Toni Donnely, Fremantle Arts Centre, Perth, Western Australia

1987 National Student Art Prize Exhibition, Mitchell College Union, New South Wales

1985 Peter Davidson and Tom Alberts, Western Australian College of Advanced Education, Mt Lawley, WA

1985 Group Show Greenhill Galleries, Perth, Western Australia

Prizes

1994 Kalgoorlie Consolidated Art Prize – Open – First Prize,

1991 The Kalgoorlie/ Boulder City – Mining Prize – First Prize

1991The City of Nedlands – Tenth Annual Art Award – Highly Commended Drawing

1990 Kalgoorlie/Boulder City- Open Painting Prize - First Prize

1990 Leonora Art Prize - Painting – Winner - First Prize

1984 Claremont Town Council Acquisition Award – Joint First Prize Drawing

Collections and Representations

The Robert Holmes a Court – Western Australia, Goldfields Art Centre - Western Australia, Kalgoorlie College - Western Australia, University of The Northern Territory, British Consulate – Perth - Western Australia, Claremont Town Council - Western Australia, Hobsons Press – New South Wales

Publications

2003 *Japanese ideas influenced painter*, Opinion, Readers in Council, Japan Times Newspaper, August, 2003

2002 *Labels taint feast without cream*, Letters, The Australian Newspaper, April 1, 2002,Page 16

2001 *Freud analysis*, Letters, The Weekend Australian Newspaper, April 21 –22, 2001, page 20

2000 *The Strangeness of Natural Vision, 36 Views of the Mandurah Estuary*, Perth Galleries, Western Australia

1997 *Fresh 97, Temporal Painting*, A PICA Press Publication, Perth, Western Australia, 1997, page 9

1996 *Object Painting*, Centre for the Creative Eye, School of Architecture and Fine Arts, The University of Western Australia, Nedlands, Western Australia

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2000 *Home is where the eye is*, Arts, On Show, David Bromfield, The West Australian, 30-9-2000, page 6

2000 *36 Views of Mandurah*, David Bromfield, Arts, Big Weekend, The West Australian, 23 September, 2000, Page 6

1998 *Nature Portrayed in Altered States,* David Bromfield, Arts, Big Weekend, The West Australian September 12,1998, page 6

1997 *A Successful State of Flux*, Fresh 97, An exhibition of time installations, time based electronic media works, PICA, Visual Art and Theatre, The Western Review, No 38, May 97, Page 14

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